

**NOMINATIONS OF THE 112TH  
CONGRESS—SECOND SESSION**

---

---

**HEARINGS**

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

—  
FEBRUARY 7 THROUGH NOVEMBER 28, 2012  
—

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations



**NOMINATIONS OF THE 112TH CONGRESS—SECOND SESSION**

S. HRG. 112-735

# NOMINATIONS OF THE 112TH CONGRESS—SECOND SESSION

---

---

## HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

### COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

---

FEBRUARY 7 THROUGH NOVEMBER 28, 2012

---

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations



Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

79-797 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2013

---

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office  
Internet: [bookstore.gpo.gov](http://bookstore.gpo.gov) Phone: toll free (866) 512-1800; DC area (202) 512-1800  
Fax: (202) 512-2104 Mail: Stop IDCC, Washington, DC 20402-0001

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
112TH CONGRESS—SECOND SESSION

JOHN F. KERRY, *Massachusetts, Chairman*

BARBARA BOXER, California	RICHARD G. LUGAR, Indiana
ROBERT MENENDEZ, New Jersey	BOB CORKER, Tennessee
BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, Maryland	JAMES E. RISCH, Idaho
ROBERT P. CASEY, Jr., Pennsylvania	MARCO RUBIO, Florida
JIM WEBB, Virginia	JAMES M. INHOFE, Oklahoma
JEANNE SHAHEEN, New Hampshire	JIM DEMINT, South Carolina
CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, Delaware	JOHNNY ISAKSON, Georgia
RICHARD J. DURBIN, Illinois	JOHN BARRASSO, Wyoming
TOM UDALL, New Mexico	MIKE LEE, Utah

WILLIAM C. DANVERS, *Staff Director*  
KENNETH A. MYERS, JR., *Republican Staff Director*

**NOMINATION OF ROBERT STEPHEN  
BEECROFT**

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2012**

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

Hon. Robert Stephen Beecroft, of California, to be Ambassador to  
the Republic of Iraq

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:42 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John F. Kerry (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Kerry, Casey, Udall, Lugar, Corker, Rubio, DeMint, and Barasso.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN F. KERRY,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS**

The CHAIRMAN. The hearing will come to order. Thank you all. I apologize to everybody that we are running a little bit late. Even though it does not appear as though a lot is happening around here, there is actually a lot going on. And I am sorry for the competing process.

I want to thank everybody for coming. I am very, very pleased to welcome Robert Stephen Beecroft, who is a Career Foreign Service officer and nominated by President Obama to be our Ambassador to Iraq. And I think all of us on the committee are pleased that the President has nominated somebody of high caliber, great experience, who has already been serving as the deputy chief of mission in Baghdad for the past year and previously served as Ambassador to Jordan and Executive Assistant to Secretaries of State Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice.

While America's war has ended in Iraq, the struggle for Iraq's future obviously has not ended. Violence is down, but Al Qaeda in Iraq remains a very deadly foe. And Iraq may not capture the day-to-day headlines, but no one should make the mistake to somehow come to the conclusion that Iraq does not present extraordinary challenges.

This administration has worked tirelessly to assure that it does not become a forgotten front. Through the Strategy Framework Initiative Agreement, we have put in place a roadmap to expand our relations with Iraq on a broad spectrum of issues: political, economic, cultural, educational, scientific, and military. Our bilateral

partnership has the potential to contribute, we believe, to the stability in the Middle East.

But Iraqi leaders have to decide for themselves what kind of country they hope to create. And as they do, we need to devote the diplomatic energy and the civilian resources necessary to help them succeed.

Ambassador Beecroft, all of your skills—considerable skills—are going to be called on in Iraq. And among the many challenges that you will face, there are four to which I would personally particularly like to just call your attention.

As we mourn the tragic death last week—deaths of Ambassador Chris Stevens and his three colleagues in Benghazi, we are reminded that our diplomats all around the world serve on the front lines of some of the world's most dangerous places. And they do so at great risk to themselves and at great personal sacrifice for their families.

Our Embassy in Baghdad, the consulates in Basra and Erbil, other offices supporting the Embassy and Office of Security Cooperation still number about 14,000 people. And that makes it our largest mission in the world. We are going to need someone with Ambassador Beecroft's demonstrated management skills to right size the mission and ensure that all the appropriate security measures are in place to keep our staff safe and secure.

Iraq's leaders have a rare opportunity to consolidate their democracy and build a strong, durable institution or set of institutions that can hold the country together. But more will be required from the Iraqi Government.

Questions remain about whether Iraqi leaders, including the Prime Minister, aspire to represent a unified Iraq in all of its diversity, or whether they seek to govern narrowly according to ethnic and sectarian constituencies.

To ensure that parliamentary elections in 2014 are free and fair, Iraq's electoral commission must be professional, transparent, and impartial. Iraqi leaders across the political spectrum must also be willing to make tough compromises and put national priorities over personal ambitions.

It is no secret that we are at a moment of heightened sectarian tensions in the Middle East. Iraqi leaders should understand that the best way to insulate themselves from the horrific violence in Syria is through a meaningful, political compromise in Iraq. As Iraq's leaders work to establish a more stable political order, they need to redouble efforts to reach agreement on disputed boundaries, on oil, and on Kirkuk's final status. If progress is not made in diffusing tensions, the window for a peaceful resolution of Kirkuk and other disputed territories may well close.

Baghdad and Erbil must resolve their differences on the Kurdish region's authority to enter into oil exploration and production contracts. And to their credit, the Iraqis have made efforts to resolve issues related to revenue-sharing, but the country still lacks an overarching legal framework for its oil industry. Without this agreement, Iraq will be unable to unleash the full potential of its oil sector.

For years, Iraq has focused on its internal politics, but it now must also begin to look outward. It is not surprising that Iraq

seeks neighborly relations with Iran, but the reports of Iran using Iraqi air space to resupply Assad's ruthless regime are troubling. Just this week, the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps acknowledged that Iran is providing assistance and training to groups inside Syria, begging the question of how else Iranian material might get into Syria. This is a problem, and it will only grow worse if it is not addressed.

Iraq's response to the situation in Syria will also be an important test case. The Maliki government should play a constructive role in supporting initiatives that bring about a peaceful transition in Syria. At a minimum, it should avoid fanning the flames of violence. It will also be incumbent on other countries in the region, particularly the Gulf Cooperation Council, to recognize Iraq as something other than an Iranian proxy and to work more proactively to normalize relations.

I continue to believe that Iraq has an opportunity to chart its own course as an alternative to the Iranian model and demonstrate the vibrant potential of a truly multiethnic, Shia majority democracy.

Let me just close by reiterating that our Embassy in Baghdad is one of our most important today. And what happens there is critical to our bilateral relationship, but also to all of our work in the Middle East. This is not a time for delay. There is no substitute for having a confirmed ambassador in place and ready to hit the ground running, especially at this critical moment in the region.

It is my hope to move this nomination as rapidly as we can in the next 48 hours because we must have a confirmed ambassador, and it would be a dereliction of the Congress' responsibility were we to leave here for the next 6 weeks and not have done so.

I strongly support Ambassador Beecroft's nomination and intend to work for that swift confirmation.

So, Ambassador Beecroft, we welcome you today. Thanks for coming on short notice. I know we appreciate it, and we look forward to hearing your thoughts on the way forward in Iraq.

Senator Lugar.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD G. LUGAR,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM INDIANA**

Senator LUGAR. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Today's hearing is our first since the attack in Libya that claimed the lives of four Americans, including our Ambassador, Chris Stevens. The events in Benghazi and ongoing threats to our embassies remind us of the dangers and difficulties of performing diplomatic missions. It is almost impossible to be an effective American diplomat without exposing oneself to risk.

In some countries, these risks can be intense, yet exceptional Americans, like Ambassador Stevens, continue to volunteer for these assignments. We are grateful that you continue to volunteer, sir.

Chris' life and work resonate especially with our committee, not merely because he was a talented diplomat, but also because he was one of us. On many occasions during his time as a detailee to the Republican staff in 2006 and 2007, he sat directly behind where I am sitting now. He staffed hearings on Lebanon, Iraq, and

other Middle East topics. In fact, exactly 6 years ago today, he helped staff a hearing on Iran. After departing the committee, he stayed in close touch with friends here as he did at every stage in his career. We will miss our friend dearly. Our thoughts go out to his family.

Although the death of Ambassador Stevens and three others was a blow to the State Department and our country as a whole, it also underscored the importance of our diplomacy and the difference that an ambassador can make. All of us have read accounts of Chris Stevens' extraordinary service and it should be clear to everyone that he was personally instrumental in advancing United States interest in Libya.

We need good ambassadors at their posts providing energetic leadership to their embassy teams. I appreciate Ambassador Beecroft's courage and commitment in taking on an extremely difficult assignment that has been complicated even further by violence in the Middle East. He has been functioning as chief of mission for several months, and I believe we should move with dispatch to confirm him as our Ambassador to Iraq.

His experience with managing large embassies is especially critical given that the United States mission in Iraq is the biggest Embassy in the world. The operation includes the huge Embassy Complex in Baghdad, several outlying facilities in Baghdad, about 10 security cooperation and police training sites, and consulates in Basra and Erbil. Employees number approximately 1,600 United States direct hires, 240 Iraqis, and thousands of contractors.

Iraq sits astride the Sunni-Shia divide that has been the source of great conflict. Politically, Iraq remains fractured along sectarian lines, and those divisions appear to have deepened in the last year. Iraq's stability depends on it being integrated with responsible neighbors and the world community. Its long-term future depends on its willingness to stand on the side of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

Iraq's political fragmentation and corruption also present fundamental challenges to its economy. An annual World Bank report that analyzes the ease of doing business and the protection of property rights across 183 economies ranked Iraq 164th in 2012, down five slots from its 2011 ranking.

Despite Prime Minister Maliki's claims that Iraq is open for business, most interested investors and trade partners are challenged to get a visa or definitive answers from the government about its tender and bidding processes. According to the World Bank, Iraq last year implemented policies that made it more difficult for Iraqis themselves to do business.

I look forward to hearing Ambassador Beecroft's insights into the security situation in Iraq, as well as his views of the prospects for economic improvement and political stability. Beyond reports on the current status of Iraq, the administration needs to illuminate United States intentions in Iraq for the long term. Though some significant downsizing has occurred, the Iraq operation continues to be enormously expensive. How does the administration define United States goals in Iraq? What are the prospects for achieving these goals? And what resources will be required over the long term?



I thank the chairman for this hearing.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks very much, Senator Lugar, and thanks for your personal recollections of Chris Stevens. We appreciate it very much.

Ambassador Beecroft, you can tell there is a considerable interest here, and we look forward to your comments, and then some period for the committee to ask some questions.

**STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT STEPHEN BEECROFT, OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF IRAQ**

Ambassador BEECROFT. Thank you, Chairman Kerry, Senator Lugar, members of the committee. It is an honor to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq. I am deeply grateful to the President and to Secretary Clinton for this opportunity. With your permission, I would like to submit my full statement for the record.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, it will be placed in the record. Thank you.

Ambassador BEECROFT. Thank you. I would like to begin by taking a moment to acknowledge my colleagues who perished in Benghazi only last week. These four brave public servants represent the best of the United States. My thoughts and prayers remain with their family and friends.

I have spent most of my career working on the Middle East, including my assignments in Syria and Saudi Arabia and as Ambassador to Jordan. For much of my career, I have been immersed in Iraqi issue, from serving on the Iraq desk in Washington, DC, to most recently serving as deputy chief of mission and now Chargé d'Affaires in Baghdad, where I have had the honor to work with an extraordinarily talented, hardworking, and collegial team, the best in the business in my experience.

Today the United States is engaging with an evolving Iraq. The country is only now emerging from over 50 years of isolation, fragmentation, and war. We have a strong relationship with the democratically elected government. This relationship is codified in the U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement, which lays out a shared vision and a concrete common roadmap for our bilateral commitments across the fields of defense, economics, justice, diplomacy, education, and energy. Through this agreement, we support and assist the Iraqis in building a united, federal, and democratic country that can play a constructive role in the region.

Of course, challenges abound, and our work is not easy.

Sectarian frictions remain strong and often threaten to derail negotiated accords and institutional progress. Lack of a hydrocarbons law feeds this tension and unsettles Iraq's oil expert sector. Factional feuding in the Council of Representatives has slowed the organization of provincial elections scheduled for early 2013. Tensions with Turkey, the conflict within Syria, and Iraq's relationship with Iran all fan anxiety and complicate our relationship with Iraq.

Nevertheless, developments I have seen in Iraq give me reason for optimism. A large majority of Iraqis of all confessions and ethnicities remain committed to resolving their differences politically instead of through violence. Iraq's oil production recently passed 3 million barrels per day, a level it had not achieved for

more than 3 decades. U.S. commercial interests are returning to Iraq, and Iraqi students are studying in the United States in increasing numbers. These are signs of positive change, and the United States retains a vital and continuing role in support of Iraq's democratic progress.

If confirmed, I pledge to continue working with our allies across the Iraqi political spectrum to strengthen Iraq's democracy and its democratic institutions. I also pledge to continue engaging with the Iraqi Government on a wide range of initiatives to expand economic growth, strengthen the justice sector, fight corruption, and protect human rights. If confirmed, I assure you that my No. 1 priority will continue to be the safety of Embassy personnel and U.S. citizens living in Iraq. Nothing is more important to the President, the Secretary of State, or to me personally.

I will also work to ensure that we have the right personnel and resources to successfully carry out our mission. As Chargé d'Affaires, I am continuing the GlidePath process begun by Ambassador Jeffrey earlier this year. As part of that effort, we have already made significant cuts in our staffing and contractor support, and will further reduce our footprint without compromising our mission or our security. We continue to work toward a more appropriate posture in Iraq, while even more effectively pursuing our policy objectives.

It is a tremendous honor to have been nominated by President Obama to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq. Should I be confirmed, I will seek to expand and deepen our collaboration with Iraq and its people, and to secure our vital interests.

I look forward to collaborating closely with you and your staffs, and I encourage you to visit Iraq to see the important work we are doing there.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Beecroft follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROBERT STEPHEN BEECROFT

Chairman Kerry, Ranking Member Lugar, members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, it is a distinct honor to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq. I am deeply grateful to the President and to Secretary Clinton for the opportunity to serve my country in this capacity and, if confirmed, I will work closely with you to advance our many interests in Iraq and in the region.

I would like to begin my testimony by taking a moment to acknowledge my colleagues who perished in Benghazi only a few days ago. Those four brave public servants represent the best of the United States and I feel their loss keenly. My thoughts and prayers remain with their families and friends.

Mr. Chairman, I have spent most of my career working on the Middle East, including assignments in Syria and Saudi Arabia and as Ambassador to Jordan. For much of my career I have been immersed in Iraq issues, from the Iraq Desk in Washington, DC, to recently serving as deputy chief of mission and now Chargé d'Affaires in Baghdad. I stand on the shoulders of the thousands of brave and committed Americans who have worked, fought, and died to help the Iraqi people achieve our shared goal of a united, federal, and democratic Iraq. If confirmed, I would commit to continuing their work to build a lasting partnership with Iraq. In so doing, I would labor alongside a team of able and dedicated personnel who understand the importance of achieving success. While the size and nature of our presence may have changed, our interests and commitments remain the same, and Iraq continues to be a top priority for the United States.

Today, the United States is engaging with an evolving Iraq. The country is only now emerging from over 50 years of isolation, fragmentation, and war. We now have

a strong relationship with a democratically elected government. As President Obama stated last year, our relationship with Iraq is a "normal relationship between sovereign nations, an equal partnership based on mutual interests and mutual respect." This relationship is based on a shared vision of the future and a concrete, common roadmap of how to get there. This fundamental accord is codified in the 2008 U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA), a comprehensive document that structures our bilateral commitments across the fields of defense, economics, justice, diplomacy, education, and energy. Through the SFA, we support and assist the Iraqis in building a united, federal, and democratic country that is a strong partner that can play a vital and constructive role in the region. I am confident that our policy based on the Strategic Framework Agreement offers a new window of opportunity for sound relations with Iraq for years to come. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will deploy all the tools available to me to this end.

Strengthening our partnership with Iraq will help us to advance significant U.S. national interests, including counterterrorism cooperation against threats to our national security and that of the region, economic growth and the stabilization of global energy markets, and the development of democracy during this historic moment of transition in the Middle East. I would like to share with you some of my views on the work ahead and on the priorities that we have in Iraq.

#### SECURITY AND COUNTERTERRORISM

Terrorists and extremists in the region continue their destructive efforts to hinder the great strides made by the Iraqi people to put aside violence. The Iraqi security forces are aggressively pursuing and disrupting these enemies, but Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and other militant groups continue to pose a threat to the Iraqi people and to U.S. personnel working in Iraq. The Department is taking all possible measures to mitigate the threat to our personnel and facilities in Iraq and we continuously monitor security conditions throughout the country. However, terrorist violence still occurs on a regular basis in Iraq and presents an inherent risk and threat to our mission, which will continue to exist for the foreseeable future.

We share a common goal with the Iraqi people—to ensure that Iraq does not become a land that provides safe haven to those who mean harm and to those who seek to reverse the progress that has been made. While some significant attacks continue to take place in Iraq, security today is nonetheless far better than in 2006 and 2007, and we must be mindful of this strong progress as we work to understand the reality of the situation on the ground. These gains were achieved through a strong partnership with the Iraqi Government and engagement on a wide range of counterterrorism and security-related efforts that aimed to provide an environment of safety and stability for both the Iraqi people and for U.S. personnel and interests in Iraq. This partnership continues to this day. It is in our strategic interests that Iraq is now defending itself, as the Embassy's Office of Security Cooperation in Iraq helps train and professionalize Iraqi defense forces, and the Police Development Program and the Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program advises and trains Iraqi law enforcement units. No one wants peace in Iraq more than the Iraqi people, and we will continue to work with the Iraqi Government and security forces toward that goal.

#### ECONOMY

Although security often dominates what we hear and read about Iraq, I would like to draw attention to the remarkable progress made to spur the growth of the Iraqi economy. Iraq's oil production recently passed 3 million barrels per day, a level it had not achieved for more than three decades. The influx of revenue from increased oil production and exports is driving growth in all sectors of the Iraqi economy, which is expected to continue to expand at double-digit growth rates in the next few years. With the third-largest conventional oil reserves in the world, Iraq's potential is extraordinary, and we are working closely with the Iraqis to help them reach this potential.

We are working with the government and private firms on initiatives to more transparently manage Iraq's oil revenues, enhance Iraqi entrepreneurialism and integration into the global economy, and reduce its dependence on the oil and gas sector. Iraq's growth and potential also offer exciting opportunities for U.S. firms. We are encouraging and working with U.S. businesses, universities, and other institutions to partner with Iraqi organizations and find new opportunities that will bring benefit to all sides and to remove barriers to deeper economic ties. The response has been strong, both from Iraqis and from Americans.

## SERVICES

We are working with Iraq to ensure that the benefits of growth accrue to all Iraqis in all corners of the country. The Iraqi people, through their votes and their voices, have demanded better access to water, electricity, and other important services. The Iraqi Government, working to address the concerns of its people, created a 5-year national development plan that includes more than 2,700 projects valued at about \$186 billion—including projects to support its utilities infrastructure, transportation network, education, health care, agriculture, and telecommunications systems. In the 2012 budget alone, the Iraqi Government has allocated \$32 billion for public investment. Still, there is much more work needed to be done by the Iraqi Government to give the Iraqi people what they deserve—a stable, secure nation where basic services are readily available and one in which they can build a prosperous future.

## DIPLOMATIC AND POLITICAL SUPPORT

Iraq's diversity has made it a unique and important nation in the Middle East for thousands of years. This same diversity now serves as one of the most important tests to democracy in the region. As with all democracies, Iraq's Government contains myriad differing opinions regarding the rightful direction of the country. Sectarian friction remains strong and often threatens to derail negotiated accords and institutional progress. There is no denying the tensions between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the central government, even as increased dialogue to discuss these issues appears possible. The lack of a hydrocarbon law feeds this tension and unsettles Iraq's oil sector and thereby its primary source of income. Factional feuding in the Council of Representatives has slowed the organization of provincial elections scheduled for early 2013. Tensions with Turkey, the conflict within Syria, and Iraq's neuralgic relationship with Iran all fan anxiety and complicate our relationship with Iraq. My colleagues and I at Embassy Baghdad and its constituent posts have no illusions about the difficulty of addressing these challenges.

Nevertheless, developments in Iraq give me reason for optimism. Despite disputes and disagreements, Iraqi leaders have worked within the political process and have chosen to use dialogue and negotiation rather than resort to violence. Iraq's Government institutions, like those of any democracy, are far from perfect, but they have become an important space where both agreement and dissent can be raised and discussed—a far cry from the dictatorial domination of the past.

The United States continues to play a central role in facilitating dialogue between the various political parties and leaders in Iraq. We assume this role while remaining clearly cognizant of the need to respect Iraq's sovereignty. We are not in the business of telling the Iraqi people what they can and cannot do. Instead, working closely with all Iraqis, including ethnic and religious minorities, displaced persons, widows, and other populations, we help ensure that all groups in Iraq, no matter how large or how small, have a voice. Our efforts seek to promote important issues such as human rights, anticorruption, religious freedom, economic development, political openness, and opportunities for women. Through a range of programs and initiatives, we strive to increase the capabilities of Iraqi Government institutions to ensure that the decisions that affect the fate of the Iraqi nation are not made at the whim of individuals, but through the deliberative process laid out in Iraq's Constitution.

## REGIONAL RELATIONS

Turning to the region, the U.S. effort in Iraq has far-reaching effects as Iraq remains vital to U.S. interests in the Middle East. Strategically positioned between Syria and Iran, bordering regional powers and important U.S. partners in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Kuwait, Iraq plays a vital role in a wide range of U.S. interests and in major foreign policy priorities throughout the region.

It is clear that Iraq is growing stronger, and there is no doubt that it will become a major power in the region as it continues to ascend. It is developing its own unique identity, one that is fiercely protective of its sovereignty. Iran will continue to try to exert influence on Iraq but, the stronger and more cohesive that Iraq is as a nation, the more resistant it will be to unwanted pressure. Maintaining Iraq as a strong, stable, and strategic partner will help the United States maintain visibility and influence in this dynamic and vitally important region for years to come.

## EMBASSY MANAGEMENT

To better achieve our policy goals and to pursue our national interests in Iraq, we must maintain a strong, safe presence capable of addressing the many facets of

our strategic partnership. If confirmed as Ambassador, I assure you that my No. 1 priority will be to ensure the safety of Embassy personnel and U.S. citizens living in Iraq. Nothing is more important to the President, the Secretary, or to me personally.

As we planned and executed the transition to a wholly civilian-led presence in 2011, we began looking at the next phase of our transition to the post-Security Agreement era. We prudently built a robust structure to cope with the enormous uncertainties in the wake of the withdrawal, but we always anticipated streamlining and normalizing our operations in a methodical, phased fashion to something more consistent with our other missions around the world.

With our personnel safely in place, we will do our best to carry out the mission we were sent to do; the mission I have described in my testimony. Let me speak for a moment about the resources required to make all this happen. Earlier in my testimony I noted that the U.S. relationship with Iraq is transitioning. Our Embassy footprint reflects this, in tandem with our bilateral relationship. As *Chargé d'Affaires*, I am continuing the glide path process begun by Ambassador Jeffrey earlier this year. As part of that effort, we have already made significant cuts in our staffing and contractor support and will further reduce our footprint without compromising our mission and security.

Managing our presence and efforts in Iraq also takes a significant degree of coordination between leadership here in Washington and those working on the ground. Our effort in Iraq is still very much a collaborative process with a wide range of U.S. departments and agencies working together to provide the expertise needed to support our policy and goals. I would like to thank all involved for their continued support in Iraq. To succeed in Iraq, it will continue to take a whole-of-government approach to make sure we have the right expertise, the right resources, and the right policies.

If confirmed as Ambassador, I will continue the rightsizing effort, matching resources to mission, and will work closely with the Congress to ensure that we have what we need to reach our policy objectives and support the national security interests of the United States.

It is a tremendous honor to have been nominated by President Obama to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq. Should I be confirmed, I will seek to expand and deepen our collaboration with Iraq and its people and to secure our vital interests. We accomplish our work ever mindful that our country has given much in support of our objectives in Iraq. Although our troops have departed Iraq, we will never forget their sacrifices and accomplishments. Working side by side with hopeful Iraqis, they created an Iraq with a brighter future. And for those who gave their lives for this cause and their families who bore the brunt of our Nation's loss, we will continue to work to build a lasting and successful relationship with Iraq that pays tribute to and honors their sacrifice.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks very much, Mr. Ambassador. Thank you.

Can you share with me an answer to the issue I raised about the Iranians using Iraqi air space in order to support Assad? What are we doing—what have you been doing, if anything, to try to limit that use?

Ambassador BEECROFT. I have personally engaged on this repeatedly at the highest levels of the Iraqi Government. My colleagues in Baghdad have engaged on this. We are continuing to engage on it. And every single visitor representing the U.S. Government, from the Senate—recently 3 visitors—to administration officials, has raised it with the Iraqis and made very clear that we find this unacceptable, and we find it unhelpful and detrimental to the region and to Iraq, and, of course, first and foremost, to the Syrian people. It is something that needs to stop and that we are pressing and will continue to press until it does stop.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I mean, it may stop when it is too late. If so many people have entreated the government to stop, and that does not seem to be having an impact, that sort of alarms me a little bit and seems to send a signal to me that maybe we should make some of our assistance or some of our support contingent on some kind of appropriate response.

I mean, it just seems completely inappropriate that we are trying to help build their democracy, support them, put American lives on the line, money into the country, and they are working against our interests so overtly—against their interests, too, I might add.

Ambassador BEECROFT. Senator, I share your concerns 100 percent. I will continue to engage, and, with your permission, I will make very clear to the Iraqis what you have said to me today, and that this is—you find it alarming, and that it may put our assistance and our cooperation on issues at stake.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I think that it would be very hard to—I mean, around here I think right now there is a lot of anxiety about places that seem to be trying to have it both ways. So I wish you would relay that obviously, and I think members of the committee would want to do so.

Can you tell us, with respect to the safety issues, and personnel, and our citizens there, are you taking extra steps now? Are there additional initiatives in place as a result of what has happened in the last week or two?

Ambassador BEECROFT. For some time now, and all the more so in light of recent events, we have taken a very cautious and careful look at our security on a regular basis. We have our own security at the Embassy. We think it is sizable. It is robust. And we are very confident that it is what we need at this time.

At the same time, we are fully engaged with Iraqi officials, both political and security officials, at the most senior levels to ensure that they give us the cooperation that we feel we need. And so far they have done that. They have pledged to protect us, and we are doing everything to ensure that they keep to that pledge, and that we meet our part of it by ensuring that we are as safe as can be on our terms.

At the same time, I would comment we enjoy geographic advantages. The Embassy is located inside the international zone, the green zone, as you know. And there are a number of checkpoints that are closely guarded getting into it. It is not a place where demonstrations usually take place.

The CHAIRMAN. What has the reaction of the Iraqi people been to the events of the last week?

Ambassador BEECROFT. So far compared to other places in the region, it has been quite muted. There have been demonstrations throughout the country, but they have been low level. And there has been nothing that is specifically threatening. There have been statements highly critical of the film that is at issue, and statements by some political leaders that they should examine their relationship with the United States because of this film.

But on the whole, we get good cooperation. We continue to engage, and Iraqi officials are meeting with us as regular in going about business.

The CHAIRMAN. Increasingly we are hearing more anecdotal and other reports about the increased authoritarianism of the Maliki government and the political system itself, perhaps becoming less democratic and so forth. Can you share your perceptions of that with us, and how you see this trend line moving?

Ambassador BEECROFT. Iraq is a democracy. It does face a lot of issues that are challenging to that democracy. It is fragile in many

ways. We are working constantly with all sides, with the Prime Minister, with his party, his bloc, with other blocs and other parties across the political spectrum to ensure that democratic institutions and the democratic process is strengthened.

In short, what we are doing is pushing them all to engage to pursue their interests in the legislative process, in an independent reform process that they have agreed to. In other words, use the system to achieve what you need to achieve rather than look outside the system and make it fall apart.

The CHAIRMAN. So, Mr. Ambassador, I remember sitting downstairs—we in this building on the ground floor in that big hearing room when Secretary Condoleezza Rice testified. And I remember her saying to us vividly, well, we are just a few weeks away from signing an agreement on the oil—on the division of the oil and having an oil agreement—you know, global oil agreement for Iraq.

I guess we are about 5 years later now, maybe 6. I do not remember the precise timing of that. Still no agreement. Still the problem with the Kurds. Still the problem with Sunni minority feeling divorced, et cetera.

There is certain skepticism now about whether or not the current government actually intends to have a diverse, pluralistic representative government, or whether we are moving toward some other form of sectarian division here. I think a lot of people are worried about it. Can you share your perspective about that?

Ambassador BEECROFT. You are right about the hydrocarbons law. There still is no hydrocarbons law. We think this, next to Iraq's Constitution, is one of the most important laws that could go into place in the country. We are pushing it very aggressively.

Most recently, Ambassador Carlos Pasqual from the State Department, who looks after energy issues there, and a representative from the Department of Energy, came to Iraq, met with Iraqi officials. Deputy Secretary Bill Burns followed up last week with a visit and pushed the same issue. We are pointing out to them this is a way to unify and unite the country, which is what they need to do at this time.

I am pleased to be able to say that there has been some subsequent engagement by the Iraqis on oil issues, and some discussion of restarting negotiations on the hydrocarbons law. And we are going to continue to push them in that direction. It is a positive trend, a positive sign.

Most recently, representatives from the Kurdish regional government were in Baghdad only a few days ago meeting with the Minister of Oil there. And by all reports what we hear, what we see in the press, they did make some progress, and they are moving forward on that. So while it is not the hydrocarbons law itself, these are issues which should smooth relations and allow for the hydrocarbons law to go forward in the future. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, Inshallah.

Ambassador BEECROFT. Inshallah.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Lugar.

Ambassador BEECROFT. Thank you, sir.

Senator LUGAR. Let me just follow on Senator Kerry's questioning, because what he and you have described is a country which clearly is a sovereign country. But without the hydrocarbons

law, which was anticipated so that the oil, the basic revenue for a good part of managing the government, never came to be. Therefore, deals have been made by the Kurds on occasion with companies outside of Iraq, that sort of commerce is proceeding with or without the hydrocarbon law. Therefore, there is some dispersion of the wealth of the country, quite apart from some questions about how the Kurds fit into this Iraq situation.

The question that Iraqis must have, quite apart from Americans, sort of getting back to testimony we used to hear before this committee, in which some people were advocating there really were three different countries, or we ought to recognize really the realities of Iraq as opposed to having this fiction that there was one country, and somehow or other this oil and constitutional framework representing the three major groups and others would come into being.

How does the country operate given these divisions, granted that Maliki has authority. From time to time, there are reports of terrorism in Iraq against Iraqis. And you mentioned these are still going to happen, but how do they move toward happening at all? Is there an impetus toward unity in the country that we should say, given patience and given time, this is going to work out? Or is the trend maybe the other way given the events in the Middle East, given the ties with Iran, whatever they may be, or problems of Shiites and Sunnis everywhere? Is this really a solid country?

Ambassador BEECROFT. Thank you, Senator Lugar. Yes, I think it is. There's a solid basis for the country to go forward and succeed here. While there are forces that would pull Iraq apart, what we continue to see and what is encouraging is that Iraqis continue to resolve their differences through dialogue, through negotiation. And so when they do have disputes, which they have frequently to be perfectly honest, they find ways to resolve them peacefully and as part of this democratic process.

Our job is to continue to encourage that and then continue to support them as they do that, and point out ways where they can do it more effectively.

The hydrocarbons law, as you point out, is one way of doing that. Strengthening the legislative process is another way of doing that, focusing on key—helping them to focus on key laws that they need to pass as part of that legislative process. For example, the law on the High Electoral Commission, putting new commissioners in place. These are things that will help unify the country over time.

But right now, I think it is headed in the right direction, but with plenty of ups and downs on that trend line. We need to keep the trend line going and try to minimize the downs.

Senator LUGAR. Is your counsel appreciated? Our enthusiasm in the United States obviously is for a unified Iraq.

Ambassador BEECROFT. I think by and large, we are listened to very closely. Most Iraqis will say the United States continues to have a role to play in Iraq. And I think most Iraqis are committed to the same thing we are committed to, which is a unified federal and democratic Iraq.

Senator LUGAR. Now you mentioned the relative security of our Embassy. In the past, there has been considerable discussion, not only among diplomats, but the American public, about the size of



the Embassy in Iraq. There was discussion when this was first built, a rather monumental structure to say the least.

I remember at one conference I suggested that, in fact, this structure was so big, it might really serve as a unifying purpose for Middle Eastern countries, a sort of united forum in which they would all come together in this like The Hague. Some people found some interest in this even if the Iraqis did not. Some members of our government were not fond of this idea since it is our Embassy.

What is the future of all of the real estate, all of the responsibilities? They are huge, and this is going to be an ongoing debate, I am certain, in the Congress, as we come to budget problems in this country.

Ambassador BEECROFT. Thank you very much. We recognize that this is an issue. We started with an Embassy that was staffed to address all possible contingencies, to follow up on the wonderful work that the United States military had done in Iraq. Since that time, and again starting with Ambassador Jeffrey, and it is something that I personally am continuing and have been very, very closely involved in, and that we will pursue. We are calling it a GlidePath exercise where we are looking at what our objectives are and how we are resourced and staffed to meet those objectives. And what we have found is that we can prioritize and focus our mission and will continue to do that on what we really need to accomplish. And as we do that, we are able to reduce personnel.

Since the beginning of the year, we have reduced personnel by more than 2,000. We are now somewhere between 13,000 and 14,000 personnel in Iraq, down from over 16,000. Facilities, we have given back in the last couple of days facilities we had in Kirkuk at an air base up there, and facilities we had in Baghdad for a police training center. And we have another facility in the next few days, which we will give back also in Baghdad.

So we are reducing not just the number of personnel, but we are reducing the number of pieces of property that we occupy and use. And we are very mindful of the costs that it takes to support the mission in Iraq. And I personally am dedicated to reducing those costs by again focusing our mission on what we really need to achieve and to reshaping it so that it best does that.

Senator LUGAR. Well, we congratulate you on your service. I join our chairman in saying we are hopeful we can get action on this nomination very swiftly so that you are there and can serve our country well during these weeks and months ahead.

Thank you very much.

Ambassador BEECROFT. Thank you, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Lugar.

Senator Corker.

Senator CORKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks for calling this hearing. And thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for your willingness to serve here, and what you have been there, and for your earlier comments along with Senator Lugar's regarding Chris Stevens. I was just sitting here thinking. I listened to Senator Kerry's comments, and, you know, over the last decade there has been quite a turn of events in Iraq and for Iran over the last decade.

I mean, 10 years ago their most major enemy was right next door in Iraq. Today they are flying airplanes over Iraq into Syria to help

one of their allies. And I know that you have mentioned that everyone at every level has talked to Maliki about this, and I know that you say you will continue to do that. What I would like to hear is what his response is when you say that you would like for him to cooperate with us in our interests. What does he exactly say in response to our efforts there?

Ambassador BEECROFT. Thank you, Senator. The response is typically to express a lot of concern about events in Syria. And they are very clear that both the Prime Minister and other Iraqi officials, that they have no interest in seeing the current government continue, the regime continue. That they are no friends of that regime; that that regime has been hostile to them in the past and allowed terrorists to come into Iraq hostile to democracy in Iraq, and the institutions in Iraq, and the people of Iraq.

What they are interested in seeing, though, is that there is a clear outcome in Syria that protects their interests. And they are having a little trouble seeing that.

Senator CORKER. But what about the air space issue? I mean, why are they continuing to cooperate with Iran in that effort? What do they specifically tell you regarding that? I know we talk with them, but what is their response?

Ambassador BEECROFT. They say they engage with all parties, that they will not allow their air space, their land, their ground, to be used to transport weapons. And so that they read the manifest closely, and they have instructed that they will not allow flights in. We think—

Senator CORKER. Well, they are convinced that the flights are not carrying armaments into Syria.

Ambassador BEECROFT. Well, they are taking the manifest at face value. And what we are urging them to do is either disapprove the flights, or per U.N. resolutions, ask them to land in—

Senator CORKER. And they are taking the manifest at face value.

Ambassador BEECROFT. And so again, we are pressing them to have the aircraft either disapprove the flights or have them land and be inspected, which is their right to do.

Senator CORKER. So I think it really does—you know, I think speak to our continuing role there. And I know the first two questioners have asked this, and by the way, again I thank you for your service there, and I know it is a heavy lift.

When Senator Barasso and I first got here, which was 5½ years ago roughly, 5 years ago for him, we were talking about this hydrocarbon discussion at that time. And I remember sitting and interact with Khalilzad as he was running back and forth trying to work out some hydrocarbon law at that time. Still nothing has happened. There is no constitution. And so I think it does beg the question. I mean, we have a situation where obviously our national interests in Syria is very different than whatever Iraq is allowing to happen.

I would like for you to point to some of the things that our involvement there has caused them to do that is in our national interest, and what our continuing role should be in Iraq.

Ambassador BEECROFT. Well, let me point to—thank you very much—one particular example. Iraq recently passed the 3 million barrels per day threshold production of oil. This is certainly some-

thing, getting more oil on the market; 2.5 million barrels per day of that are exported. The rest is used domestically. This is something that is in our interests.

Senator CORKER. In the world's interest, right? It is in China's interest. It is in everybody's interest, right?

Ambassador BEECROFT. That is correct.

Senator CORKER. Yes.

Ambassador BEECROFT. But it is particularly in our interest is there are sanctions on Iran, and as Iran's production has decreased, an increase in Iraq's production helps counter that and helps maintain stable oil markets across the world. You might imagine—

Senator CORKER. It is very much in Iraq's interest, too, right?

Ambassador BEECROFT. Yes, it is, but at the same time you might imagine that they are under pressure from others not to do this, but they are doing it anyway. And it is, again, something we work closely with them on. So I take your point, but I did want to flag that as one example.

Senator CORKER. I think it is a serious question. We have had ambassadors, really good ambassadors, and I am sure you are going to be equally as good. But we have the best of the best in Iraq, and as you look at the things that we have encouraged them to do, it is really difficult. I cannot really remember anything of significance that our involvement there through diplomatic relations has caused them to do that is in our national interest.

If you could just point to one. I mean, selling 3 million barrels of oil is in their interests, OK? I mean, it would be cutting their nose off to spite their face not to do that. So I would not say that is in our interest.

So what is it that we have shaped there diplomatically since we have been there that has been in our national interest?

Ambassador BEECROFT. Well, it is certainly national interests, I believe, that we have a unified Iraq that plays a productive, constructive role in the region. Iraq recently hosted back in March, end of March, the Arab League summit, where it brought all the Arab leaders, and you had 9 heads of state, and I believe 22 delegations present for that. Again, a sign that it is a unified peaceful Iraq, not Iraq that is fractured, broken up, at war with itself, or at war with its neighbors.

It continues to battle al-Qaeda very, very strongly. This is something also that is in our interests, the fight against terrorism. And we will continue to work with them on things like this. These are our most important priorities, in my view, and we are getting a degree of success.

Senator CORKER. Are there not some border leakages right now between Iraq and Syria that are allowing more al-Qaeda folks to flow into Syria at present? I mean, is that not an issue?

Ambassador BEECROFT. The Iraqis have dispatched a whole number of troops to the border to protect the border to stop the flow either way into or out of. I read in this morning's news, for example, sir, that they had killed, I think, three terrorists attempting to cross over, AQL, into Iraq from Syria. So they are there. They are trying to protect the borders, and again they are trying to stop the flow of weapons on the ground and personnel, either way.

Senator CORKER. Well, I know my time is up, and I think you have heard from the three questioners so far of different parties that, first of all, we thank you for your service, and I do think you will be approved very quickly. And we thank you for coming in for this hearing.

We know that the work there is very difficult, and we are dealing with folks that obviously, as you would expect, are looking after their own interests first. But I think you are going continue to be pressured by folks here and other places to see results there with our diplomatic actions. I know that they are asking for increased aid. I do think that aid is coming under increased pressure. And I think people are going to want to see results.

So I thank you for your willingness to take on this role. I thank you for answering in an earnest way our questions. But I think there are going to be many, many more. And as you take this on, I hope the Government of Iraq understands also that we would like to see some movement in a positive direction on issues that have been sitting around for a long, long time and left unaddressed.

Thank you very much.

Ambassador BEECROFT. Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Ambassador, I have to go to another meeting, and I apologize to you. Senator Casey is going to chair, and he is going to be recognized as the next questioner anyway. But I just want to wish you well. As I said, we will try to move this as fast as we can.

I want to thank you for your taking on this tough task, and thank your family at the same time for their contribution to this effort. We really appreciate it. Thank you very, very much.

Ambassador BEECROFT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Casey.

Senator CASEY [presiding]. Thank you, sir. We are grateful for your willingness to serve yet again, and we appreciate that.

I have a couple of questions to start with that involve the issue of the over flights over Iraq. And as a predicate to that, I wanted to ask you about your sense of what we can do to be as vigilant as possible.

A number of weeks ago now, I chaired a hearing on the Iranian influence in the region, especially their support for terrorism in the region. And one of our witnesses at that hearing was Ambassador Jim Jeffrey. And as a predicate to my question, I want to quote from something Ambassador Jeffrey said. I asked him about Iranian influence in Iraq, and he said the following, and I am quoting. He said, "At present, our overall strategy in Iraq, including stemming strategy Iranian dominance of the country, has been successful despite a massive cut in our resources committed. That is a policy we should continue, bearing always in mind that this success is fragile and should not be placed at risk for wider policies. If Iranian pressure increases, we have tools to counter it." That is what Ambassador Jeffrey said at the time, not too long ago. So it is clear that Iran has brought to bear great pressure on Iraq as it relates to allowing that air space for the over flights.

I wanted to ask you specifically, What tools do we have to deal with that problem? And I know you spoke to this in response to

questions already this morning. But just to put an even finer point on it, if you can do that.

Ambassador BEECROFT. Thank you, Senator. I will answer what I can in this setting.

Senator CASEY. Sure.

Ambassador BEECROFT. And I am sure that there could be a classified meeting if necessary. But what I want to say is that our major tool is to work with the Iraqis. I think the starting point that they have their own self-interests that all groups in Iraq recognize that they have their own interests, and those are not necessarily Iranian interests, and why there is some overlap or some shared interests.

On the whole, Iraqis take the approach that they are a sovereign democratic nation, that they are independent of Iran. If their interests happen to coincide, that is fine. But if their interests do not coincide, what we see is that they follow their own interests, and they do not succumb to pressure. And one example of this is the oil example I just gave.

What we need to do is again strengthen this democracy, that there is an Iraq. Make sure that it is not a house divided which is easily influenced and pressured, but a house that is united and strong by getting all parties to play in the political process constructively. And we need to work with them to show them that, you know, we will support them in pursuing their own interests. That we will counterbalance the influence that is coming from outside to the extent we can, except we can play a helpful role. That we will have a strong relationship with them that supports them.

Senator CASEY. Well, I appreciate that because I have great confidence you will be confirmed. And as you assume your new posting, I hope that you make it very clear to the Iraqi leadership that we have great concerns about this. I think people in both parties here in the House and the Senate have concerns, first and foremost, about the Iranian nuclear program and preventing them from getting a nuclear weapons capability. At least that is my position. I think that is a widely shared belief or point of view.

But in addition to that, even if there was not this nuclear threat, the threat that they pose to the region and beyond is of paramount importance to us. So I hope that you continue to reiterate that position.

I want to ask you as well about the politics of Iraq. We sometimes do not have a chance to spend a lot of time on an issue like that. But I was struck when I was there in July 2010 with Senator Shaheen and Senator Ted Kaufman from Delaware. Our visit to Iraq just happened to overlap with a visit by the Vice President. So we had a moment, probably about a 2-hour window, when we could actually sit with him. And he had just come from a series of meetings with the various Iraqi officials trying to work out the politics and the difficult management of that and doing everything he could to bring the sides together.

As you know a lot better than I, it is one thing to have political or ideological differences. It is another thing when it has its origin in ethnicity and all kinds of other divisions. So it is particularly difficult to bring the sides together.

I was also struck by how capable the Vice President was in dealing with that because he spent a lot of time with all these players.

There is still a real concern now that those politics have not worked out as well as we had hoped. And in particular, there is a concern or maybe an allegation—that might be too strong a word—that Prime Minister Maliki is becoming more and more authoritarian. And I wanted to get your sense of that and your sense of the overall politics, because that, of course, will be the underpinning of the progress. They cannot make progress to the extent that we would hope, unless they can manage those political differences.

So I wanted to get your sense of that and what you could do to further advance those areas of cooperation or consensus.

Ambassador BEECROFT. Thank you. There clearly are divisions within Iraq and different interests. But what we see and what is encouraging is that the parties when they have disputes, when they have differences, that at the end of the day, they come together to talk and negotiate their differences. And they continue to function as a democracy. They continue to work through the legislature and the council of ministers, and outside it in informal processes or unofficial processes, to work out their differences and find ways forward.

Now it is oftentimes a slow, protracted process. It certainly does not move at the pace that we would like to see or with the efficiency we would like to see. But as I see it, our role is largely to continue to encourage this, to be helpful in pointing out ways forward, the ways things might be done, the way they might be able to compromise or reach consensus on issues. And then to be as supportive as possible in helping them avoid any backsliding on those agreements, and to find ways to help consolidate them. And we will continue to do that as best we can.

But again, I would like to reiterate, the encouraging thing is that Iraq has not fallen apart, that it has held together. And there certainly are forces that would like to pull it apart both internally and externally. But the Iraqis themselves, much to their credit, have found ways to continue to work with each other and continue to resolve their disputes.

And I do not want to minimize the importance of these disputes. There have been very serious ones that are of great concern to particular groups in Iraq or to all Iraqis. But again, at the end of the day they find a way to step back from the precipice, to talk, and find a way forward. And we will continue to work with them on that to push them in those directions in the most positive, constructive, and encouraging way we can.

Senator CASEY. Thank you. I will have another line of questioning, but my time is up. And I think Senator Rubio is next.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you. Congratulations. Thank you for your service. I, too, anticipate there will be little, if any, objection to your nomination. I know you want to get to work quickly.

So let me touch on three subjects. The first one, there has been already discussions about Iran's influence in Iraq. In your opinion, does that influence extend to the judiciary? And I am particularly concerned in light of the Vice President's trial. There is growing evidence, at least allegations, that the Prime Minister and others have manipulated the judiciary to persecute their political enemies.

Do we have concerns that Iran's influence in Iraq has now reached or extended into the judiciary as well?

Ambassador BEECROFT. Thank you, Senator. I would say we have concerns across the board that any country, Iran or others, not play an overbearing or an overly influential role, particularly a negative one, in Iraq. We work closely with the judiciary in Iraq and the legal community. We do everything we can to ensure that there is support for rule of law programs. And so far what we see is a largely functioning judiciary that, while not—again, I cannot give it a 100 percent endorsement as perfect. No country has a perfect judiciary. It is something that again continues to function and will continue to help it function better to the extent we can.

Senator RUBIO. My second concern is about the well-being of the leader of the Democratic Party of the Iraqi Nation, Mithal al-Alusi. Have we expressed our concerns about the way he has been treated? And I believe he is now in the northern region. He has been given—I guess he has been allowed to enter and is living under their protection. But I have read a series of accounts about how different types of protections have been withdrawn. His life has been made a miserable mess in Baghdad. Apparently he has to leave Baghdad.

Have we expressed our concern about his well-being and our concern about how he has been treated?

Ambassador BEECROFT. I am sorry, Senator. I missed the name.

Senator RUBIO. Mithal al-Alusi. He is the leader of the Democratic Party of the Iraqi Nation.

Ambassador BEECROFT. Excuse me. Let me just say that first and foremost, we have concerns about human rights across the board. And we will raise those concerns at every opportunity, as well as rule of law concerns to make sure everyone is treated fair and freely.

On this specific individual, I am going to have to go back for an answer and get back to you as quickly as I can.

[The written reply from Ambassador Beecroft to the above question follows:]

Through our ongoing engagement with the Government of Iraq (GOI), we place the highest priority on respect for human rights. We will continue to encourage the GOI to adhere to the highest standards of human rights and the rule of law in a fair and transparent manner, including in the case of Mr. al-Alusi. If confirmed, I will personally look into this case with my Embassy colleagues on my return to Baghdad.

Senator RUBIO. Well, just so that I can point, he, in addition to being the leader of the Democratic Party of the Iraqi Nation, he has also been a staunch ally of the United States, courageous in many instances, a proponent of a more open society, basically everything we hope the region will become in terms of the things he stood for.

I encourage you to look into his case. It is actually well documented and pretty well known. And he has now had to leave to northern Iraq for protection because of the way the current government in Baghdad has treated him. I think it sends a terrible message to our friends and to moderate reformers in the region when the United States is silent about their well-being. I think it is con-

cerning that, quite frankly, that there is not more awareness about his plight.

But let me just to add to that. What is your view of our relationship with the regional government in the north, the Kurdish regional government? There have been accounts about how well they have developed. Certainly it is a safer region than the rest of Iraq. They have certainly progressed economically quicker than the rest of the nation. How is our relationship with them? How do you envision our relationship with them moving forward as far as their own aspirations, et cetera?

Ambassador BEECROFT. Thank you, Senator. On the first case, I will look into the case personally and we will get back to you and your staff.

Regarding the north, we are very supportive of the autonomous region of the north, and you are absolutely right, has progressed in many ways, and in many ways sets an example for not just the country, but the region, and what it can be. We will continue to support them and work with them as part of a unified, federal Iraq. And we have the best of relations with them, and we will continue to have those relations.

Senator RUBIO. I have heard concerns that the closer we get to them, the more we risk alienating the Prime Minister, and the less cooperative he may be with us. Do you share that view?

Ambassador BEECROFT. We have excellent relations also, sir, with the Prime Minister and we are going to continue to keep those. And so long as people understand this is part of a unified, federal Iraq, our work with the north should not be objectionable, and it so far has not been objectionable.

Senator RUBIO. Right, but I have heard some commentators say that we have got to be careful how we deal with them and not to appear too close to them because it may alienate or make the Prime Minister less cooperative with us. I think—and I do not want to put words in your mouth, but I think what you are saying is that there is nothing necessarily that would stand in your way of reaching out to them, and working with them, and having a close relationship with them. You do not view it as a zero sum game. You think you can have a good relationship with both.

Ambassador BEECROFT. That is absolutely right.

Senator RUBIO. OK, thank you.

Senator UDALL. Senator Casey.

Senator CASEY. Senator Udall.

Senator UDALL. Are you our chairman here?

Senator CASEY. You just arrived. I want to make sure you are OK for questioning.

Senator UDALL. Great. I am ready to go here.

Senator CASEY. Senator DeMint is ready, so I want to warn you.

Senator UDALL. OK. Thank you for being here, and we very much appreciate your service, especially in light of all of the things we have seen over the last couple of weeks. And so we are pleased that you are willing to serve.

According to the Special Inspector General for Iraq Construction, in its report of this year, the inspector said, "Antigovernment forces continue to target prominent Iraqis for assassination. Thirty-two senior government officials were killed from April until July of this



year. Not only are government officials being targeted, but judges and military offices have been targeted by assassins.”

How have these tensions impacted governance in Iraq, and are people becoming reluctant to participate in the system? And if so, how does this impact the long-term political health of Iraq?

Ambassador BEECROFT. Thank you, Senator. Violence is certainly at the top of our list of concerns in Iraq, and we are doing everything we can to cooperate with Iraqis in confronting violence, and reducing it, and holding those responsible for it accountable.

While a serious threat, we have not seen that it keeps Iraqis from continuing to work in the system. And not just that, but Iraqis from going out on the street and participating in normal life out on the street. While there may be some examples of Iraqis opting not to serve, most Iraqis are more than happy to serve and take government positions, judicial positions, and to vigorously carry out their jobs and responsibilities.

That is something we will encourage. It is something we have worked with the Iraqis on in the past is protecting their officials, and we will continue to do that very much with them so that these people can carry out their jobs safely without fear of retribution assassination.

Senator UDALL. And some of this, as you know, has been attributed to Al Qaeda in Iraq. And I was just wondering about your assessment of that. How much are they involved? Is there a resurgence there? How big of an impact are they having?

Ambassador BEECROFT. You are absolutely right. Al-Qaeda is a huge concern. They continue to perpetrate violence in Iraq. The Iraqis are focused on it. Fortunately, we are finding that the violence has not led to the things that al-Qaeda is hoping to achieve. It is not leading to sectarian conflict. It is not undermining the government in a way that people have lost complete confidence in it. It is something that again is a major concern that we need to help Iraqis deal with.

They have asked for our help, and we are going to help them as much as possible. But, yes, it absolutely remains a concern, and it needs to be dealt with.

Senator UDALL. And do you believe that the Iraqi military and intelligence services are focused on that, and that they are putting their maximum effort there?

Ambassador BEECROFT. They are focused. They have good people that are working this issue. We talk to them regularly about it, and they assure us that they are strong in their commitment.

What they have also asked us for frankly is assistance; assistance in providing information that we have, and we are doing that, and assistance in providing equipment. And we are also doing that as well.

Senator UDALL. Ambassador, I know it is not on the same level as in Afghanistan, but corruption is still a very big issue in Iraq. And I am just wondering, what do you believe they have done to effectively deal with this? Are there efforts that you would take when you get there to kind of move this whole effort along. I mean, how are we dealing with the corruption issue?

Ambassador BEECROFT. Corruption is a large issue. I think Transparency International's last report had Iraq ranked eighth in

the world on corruption, not something you want to be. Iraqis are aware of this, and the government is focused on it. We are continuing to work with them. We have people in the Embassy that work on corruption issues and engage with them regularly. It is a concern.

What we would like to point out—what we do point out to them and what they are perfectly aware of is that this hurts the things they want or diminishes the opportunity for those things—business investment first and foremost. People find it not just a difficult environment to operate in because of other reasons, but because of corruption by and large. And it makes it very, very difficult. And it discourages businesses from coming forward. So we will continue to work with them to try to deal with the problem and improve it.

Senator UDALL. One of the major criticisms that has been leveled against our participation was the signing of the agreement between Iraq and the United States as we left. Do you have any thoughts on that in terms of where we are today? Have we been able to function effectively with them? Has that set back our efforts?

Ambassador BEECROFT. Let me start by saying that United States military did fantastic work in Iraq. And I think most Iraqis today recognize that and appreciate it.

Let me also say that we put in place the Strategic Framework Agreement, which we are working through with the Iraqis to engage in a whole range of issues, everything from justice, to diplomacy, to economic issues, education issues. And this is the framework we are pursuing to ensure that we are fully engaged with them on issues that are of concern to us and also of concern to them where we can make some traction.

I think we continue to see this function well, and it continues to make progress, the progress that we want to achieve and that we want to see Iraq achieve.

Senator UDALL. Great. Thank you. Thank you very much, and once again, thank you for your service.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Senator Udall.

Senator DeMint.

Senator DEMINT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Beecroft, I also thank you for your service and your willingness to continue to serve in Iraq. We have got a lot of our blood and treasure invested.

Frankly, you have encouraged me today just as I have heard you talk. You have answered a lot of questions I have had, because I have heard a number of folks say that Iraq is unraveling, that it is just coming apart. The fact that we did not leave a stabilizing force in Iraq makes it virtually impossible for us to impact policy. And some of the things you have said suggested otherwise.

I have to admit that I am a little cynical because over the last 10 years I have gotten a number of reports that were very rosy, only to find out that was not the case at all. But you seem to be very credible and knowledgeable, so I am encouraged by what you said.

But I will just ask a few questions as a followup, and you have answered some of these to some degree. Clearly there is a growing anti-American sentiment throughout the Middle East. How pervasive is that in Iraq? And do you think the manipulated rage I think that we have seen in other countries, can that take hold in Iraq?

Ambassador BEECROFT. Thank you, Senator. Starting with manipulated rage, we have seen reactions recently in Iraq. While there have been demonstrations, they have not been of the size or severity that we have seen in other countries. And the Iraqi Government has handled matters in a very calm and peaceful way as well, and has not sought, for the most part at least, from what I have seen, to inflame things.

I think, and going to the larger question that you ask, that there is increasing good will toward the United States in Iraq, and increasing recognition of the positive role that the United States, starting with the United States military, has played there. It is our job to capitalize on that and make the most of it, and build a partnership and a relationship with Iraq.

And I do not want to minimize the difficulties that Iraqis face and that we also face. But I do want to stress that there are signs that are encouraging. There are rays of light and hope. And we will continue to work to increase the number of encouraging signs, increase the successes. And a large part of that is building the partnership that we have with Iraq and making it stronger. And this is the platform we have been left by the excellent work of the U.S. military.

Senator DEMINT. You mentioned a house divided, and this question has already been asked. But we have seen a number of reports that both Sunni Arabs and Kurds are fearful of a power grab by the Prime Minister. Some sectarian division going on there. How serious is that?

And you mentioned that it seems to be working out in a democratic way rather than a violent way. Is that the good news is there is division, but it is being worked out?

Ambassador BEECROFT. Sir, yes, you are absolutely correct, that is the good news. There are divisions. There are disputes. There are disagreements. Interests vary from issue to issue. But what we see is that Iraqis continue to talk, and, more importantly, they continue to channel their concerns through the democratic process and handle things as part of the democratic process.

So if it comes to, let us say, recently there was talk of a no confidence vote. Again, that no confidence vote was allowed in the Iraqi Constitution. And again, it was a democratic procedure which people were looking at and considering. It was not something that was outside the democratic framework.

Senator DEMINT. Just one other question, just religious freedom. You mentioned human rights. We get a lot of reports, particularly from Christian missionaries that the religious freedom is not being protected by the Iraqi Government. Is this a priority of theirs or something they try to sweep under the rug? Is there hope that the different faiths can operate within Iraq?

Ambassador BEECROFT. I think there is hope. That said, it is one of the concerns that the Embassy and that the State Department and others are very focused on in Iraq. We have received I think since 2008 three directives from Congress to spend \$10 million each, so \$30 million. We have actually spent \$72 million pursuing religious freedom and looking for ways to protect minority religious groups in Iraq. We are going to continue to do that.

We engage with them regularly. We will continue to engage with them regularly. And while the Iraqis have shown that not only do they have laws protecting religious freedom and minority religions, they have taken steps in the past in response to attacks to protect, for example, Christian churches. And when there are holidays for minority religious groups, they frequently will increase the security presence to protect these people.

These are things that, again, we need to continue to encourage and to see expand so that all people can practice their religion freely.

Senator DEMINT. Thank you. I look forward to meeting with you a little bit later. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Senator DeMint. Mr. Ambassador, I just have a couple more questions. I may be the last questioner, so you can get a sense of the light at the end of the tunnel for the hearing.

I have two lines of questioning, one on the special immigrant visas, which we know are a program that allows Iraqis who have helped American forces and helped our efforts in Iraq to have their visas expedited. As you know better than I, these are people of uncommon courage and who were of great assistance to us. They obviously live under threat of death or something very serious in terms of a threat to their safety.

I realize as well that these have been expedited, and there is some good news about the numbers. I am told that in fiscal year 2012, that there was enough expediting that the United States admitted more SIV applicants in 2012 than we did in 2011. That is encouraging, but there is a backlog, and I wanted to have you address where we are with that. How many applicants are in the pipeline and how can you, upon assumption of your new duties, move that forward?

Ambassador BEECROFT. Thank you, Senator. This is an issue that we at the Embassy, working with Washington, are very focused on. I do not have off the top of my head—I mean, I will have to go check the exact number in the pipeline right now. But you are absolutely right that numbers in 2012 have exceeded numbers in 2011 already.

[The written reply from Ambassador Beecroft to the above question follows:]

A total 707 SIVs were issued to Iraqis in FY 2011 and 3,802 have been issued in FY 2012 through August 31. As of August 31 a cumulative total of 11,165 SIVs have been issued to Iraqis since 2007.

We are going to continue to do everything we can to process these as quickly as possible. And as we get the approvals from Washington, we will expedite them.

Let me also assure you that what I have seen happen at the Embassy, and something we will continue to do, is when there are particular individuals that are suffering or under a particular threat and their case is urgent, we go out of our way. Our consular section has done a brilliant job on this, of going out of its way to make sure these people get immediate service as fast as possible, and make sure that they are as reassured as possible. We stay in touch with them. We get back to them. We do everything we can to help these people, because as you rightly point out, they have

risked their lives on our behalf, and we need to do everything we can to repay that.

Senator CASEY. Thank you. And finally, I know that you have addressed this, and it has been raised before, but I want to discuss Syrian refugees. I think there are so many of us that, even as we introduce, as I have, legislation to try to move forward in terms of humanitarian and other assistance to the Syrian people, we have a real concern about refugees. And there has been news in the last couple of days about denying men coming in, allowing women and children in in one instance.

I think there is a real concern, and you can understand how difficult it is for the Iraqis to be able to handle a lot of new refugees coming in. I remember going back—way back to 2007 when I was in my first visit to Iraq and hearing stories when we went to Jordan, a place you are familiar with, about the number of Iraqi refugees into Jordan, and how big a number that was, tens of thousands. So it is a difficult problem to manage.

But I would ask you if you can, in a broad way, assess the Iraqi refugee policies that relate to Syrian refugees. And maybe in particular, how many, if you know that number or a ballpark figure on that. And also what kind of support they have, what they can expect when they get there, and what kind of challenges there are. If you address those questions as broadly or as specifically as you can.

Ambassador BEECROFT. Thank you, Senator. The figures I saw earlier this morning, and I check these regularly, there were a little over 27,000 Iraqi refugees now in Jordan. The majority of those, roughly 23,000, are in the north, and these tend to be Syrian Kurds who have come across into the Kurdish area of Iraq.

Senator CASEY. You said 26?

Ambassador BEECROFT. Twenty-seven thousand, roughly a little over 27,000 total.

Senator CASEY. Oh.

Ambassador BEECROFT. Twenty-three thousand of those are up in the north.

Senator CASEY. OK.

Ambassador BEECROFT. Around 4,000, a little over 4,000, are in the south or center of the country. They come across largely at border crossing between Syria and Iraq, the Iraqi side known as al-Qaim. And the ones there, that border crossing has been closed. Only 2 days ago it reopened. This was very encouraging. It is something that we have been urging the Iraqis to do for some time. I think it closed around the middle of August. They let in, I believe, about 121 people yesterday. We expected more to be let in today.

The Iraqis have been constructing camps for refugees, but a lot of them that are cross are still in Iraqi Government institutions or with friends, families, and others.

What we are doing as the U.S. Government is we have contributed heavily to UNHCR and its efforts in the region. I cannot break down specifically the amount of money that goes for UNHCR's work in Iraq. I do not know that. But we do work closely with UNHCR and in touch with them on a daily basis about this issue. And we are providing all possible support for their efforts to help address the refugee inflows into Iraq.

Senator CASEY. I know this is a generalization, but do you feel positive about the Iraqi Government's and either the government or other support systems, their capacity to handle the inflow, or do you think that there are some pretty significant challenges they have to surmount?

Ambassador BEECROFT. I think they can handle the inflow if they focus on it and prioritize it. And we have seen evidence that they have done that at times. They need to continue to do it. And again, this is something that we engage regularly with them on, and something our visitors from the administration and, most recently, three from the Senate, have engaged with them on as well.

This is an important issue. Many Iraqis were refugees in Syria, and this is something that many Iraqis see as something positive they can do for Syrians in return. And we will continue to work with them to make sure that they do the right thing, and that they have the support they need to do it the right way. And we will continue to work with UNHCR also so that it is out there able to assist and provide support to the refugees that come in.

Senator CASEY. Well, Mr. Ambassador, we want to thank you for your testimony today and your presence here in answering our questions. But also in a much more significant way, thank you for your commitment to the country. This is a tough assignment even for someone who has spent a lot of time there as you have. And we know you will do well, and I know I will and a lot of members of this committee will do everything we can to move your nomination as fast as possible so that we can get you started.

But thanks for your commitment and that of your family.

And unless there is anything further, we are adjourned. But I do not have a gavel, so I will just pound the table.

Ambassador BEECROFT. Thank you very much, sir.

[Whereupon, at 11:56 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

#### ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

##### RESPONSES OF ROBERT STEPHEN BEECROFT TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOHN F. KERRY

*Question.* The State Department has long promised faster action to resolve the issues surrounding the delays in approving Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) for Iraqis who supported the U.S. effort in Iraq after the 2003 invasion.

- (a). How many SIVs have been issued, by fiscal year, since the inception of the program?

*Answer.* The chart below details how many SIVs we have issued to Iraqi applicants under both the section 1059 and section 1244 programs since implementation in FY 2007. FY 2012 numbers are through August 31, 2012.

	Principal	Derivatives	Totals
2007 .....	431	383	814
2008 .....	518	449	967
2009 .....	1,448	1,385	2,833
2010 .....	951	1,091	2,042
2011 .....	322	384	706
2012 .....	1,627	2,175	3,802
	5,297	5,867	11,164

- (b). How many applications have there been, by fiscal year?

Answer. The chart below details the number of approved I-360 immigrant visa petitions received by the State Department's National Visa Center (NVC) from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for Iraqis applying for the section 1059 and section 1244 SIV Programs:

	Iraqi Section 1059 Ap- proved I-360s	Iraqi Section 1244 Ap- proved I-360s	Combined Total
FY 2007 .....	650	0	650
FY 2008 .....	149	48	197
FY 2009 .....	139	1,614	1,753
FY 2010 .....	10	1,025	1,035
FY 2011 .....	2	2,398	2,400
FY 2012* .....	1	873	874
Totals .....	951	5,958	6,909

\* Applications to August 31, 2012.

- (c). How long is the average processing time (as measured by application filing date until the date visa issuance or notice of denial) for such applications, by fiscal year?

Answer. Processing SIVs involves a number of different steps to ensure a complete security check is performed on each applicant. Several different U.S. Government agencies are involved in this process. We do not maintain average processing times year by year for SIVs. The SIV process begins with the individual applying to Embassy Baghdad through NVC for a chief of mission letter confirming his/her eligibility for the SIV program. If the individual is found eligible for the SIV program, s/he files an immigrant visa petition with USCIS. Upon approval, USCIS sends the approved petition and supporting documents to NVC, which schedules the applicant's visa interview at the embassy or consulate of his/her choice. At the interview, the consular officer reviews the case, and if everything is in order, requests the required security vetting for all adult applicants from our interagency partners. The security vetting has been the principal delay in processing these cases since the end of 2010, but we have made great improvements since spring 2012. This improvement is reflected in the FY 2012 visa issuance numbers, which are the highest since the program's inception.

Addressing delays in security vetting of Iraqi SIV applications remains a priority for the State Department. We have streamlined the application process—which must conform to the preexisting immigrant visa process under current law—as much as possible, eliminating redundant requirements and working with our interagency partners to accept electronic submissions wherever possible. This progress allowed us to cut the backlog of Iraqi SIVs pending final action (issuance or refusal of the visa application) by 50 percent since March. In late February, 2,832 Iraqi SIV applications were pending security vetting; as of September 19, that number was reduced to 1,348.

- (d). How many are pending as of September 19, 2012?

Answer. As of September 19, 2012, there were 1,348 Iraqi SIV applications pending security clearances.

- (e). How many have been denied by fiscal year? Please list the reasons for denial and the corresponding number of visas denied for each reason, by fiscal year.

Answer. To provide this information, we need to run a customized query. We are proceeding, but it will take a few days to generate the data for a response. We will transmit this information as soon as we have it.

*Question.* The security situation in Iraq has improved since the worst days of the civil war, but the terrorist attacks in July remind that extremist groups are still active and demonstrate the country's fragile peace.

- (a). What is your assessment of the current security situation? Where do you see the major threats?

Answer. The security environment in Iraq continues to present challenges, and we are supporting the Government of Iraq's (GOI) efforts to confront threats and build long-term security and stability in Iraq. It is clear that AQI remains a dangerous threat. While there has been clear and measurable success against AQI over the years, recent attacks make clear the security situation warrants attention.

While there are formidable security challenges, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) have made impressive gains in combating terrorism. We are confident the ISF will continue pressuring AQI—and others—to further diminish their capabilities. Although Iranian backed militias have largely been quiet since the departure of U.S. Forces, they remain capable of launching attacks against the residual U.S. presence. The United States continues to stand with the GOI and is ready to work within the scope of the Strategic Framework Agreement to ensure that the capacity and ability of extremists to carry out attacks is diminished.

- (b). How are the Iraqi Security Forces developing and do you think they are capable of addressing the threats?

Answer. We are encouraged by the GOI's continuing commitment and progress in developing the capacity of Iraqi military and police forces. In February, the GOI passed a budget for 2012 that included \$15 billion in defense and security spending—15 percent of their total spending.

While the GOI is increasingly capable and effective in addressing the various security threats, we are working with it through our security assistance office, Police Development Program, and other programs to further improve the capacity of its security forces to counter terrorism, insurgency, and external threats.

- (c). Given the military withdrawal, how is the security situation impacting our Embassy's access to places beyond Baghdad? What measures are in place to support diplomatic efforts to remain engaged with all cross-sections of Iraqi society? What more, in your assessment, is needed?

Answer. Engagement is a cornerstone of our relationship with Iraq and we are meeting on a regular basis with all levels of Iraqi Government and society including the Prime Minister, the President, Cabinet and Parliament members, politicians, and civil and social leaders. The Department places the highest priority on the protection of our personnel and we take extraordinary protective security measures to enable mission staff to engage outside of secure chief of mission facilities. Every protective security detail movement is assessed from the standpoint of threat and security conditions, prioritized on the basis of available resources. Only if necessary, moves are restricted or postponed.

In the first two quarters of this calendar year, more than 6,000 protective security detail missions were carried out. Only a small number of requests have been postponed or cancelled due to threat or lack of resources.

There has been no diminishment of our ability to meet with our Iraqi counterparts since U.S. Forces left Iraq and in some areas the level of engagement is higher today than it was before the withdrawal took place.

*Question.* When it comes to human security, what are the ongoing challenges faced by the most vulnerable groups, including women, children, and religious minorities as Iraq struggles to establish lasting peace? What specific programs would you as Ambassador support to assist these populations?

Answer. Iraq's vulnerable communities face ongoing threats of violence and discrimination as well as a lack of economic opportunities. If confirmed, I will ensure that we continue to utilize all Embassy assets to advance a human rights agenda that includes the elimination of violence and discrimination based on gender, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

If confirmed, I will continue to work closely with: the Government of Iraq; the Department's Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Iraq, Barbara Leaf, who serves as the Secretary's Coordinator for Iraq's Religious and Ethnic Minorities; the Department's Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, Suzan Johnson Cooke; and Ambassador at Large for Women's Issues, Melanne Verweer, to help improve conditions for Iraq's vulnerable groups.

To date, we have provided over \$72 million in targeted assistance to Iraq's minority communities. Projects have provided short-term humanitarian assistance as well as long-term economic development initiatives to help create and secure the environment for these communities to remain in Iraq and play a meaningful role in Iraqi society. We are continuing to work with the GOI to improve security conditions for its vulnerable communities, including by urging the GOI to continue its efforts to provide additional security for places of worship and during religious holidays.

Other examples of our ongoing programs for vulnerable groups include: support for microfinance institutions to provide economic opportunities for at risk populations including women and minorities; a legal advocacy program for assistance to minorities in pursuing legal remedies through legal clinics; a "Minorities Caucus" within Iraq's Council of Representatives; and the Iraq Women's Democracy Initiative and Secretary's War Widows Program to strengthen political participation, eco-



conomic empowerment, women's rights advocacy, media skills, as well as negotiation and capacity-building for women's NGOs.

If confirmed, I will continue the good work that has been done to help create conditions for these communities to remain in Iraq and bring their concerns to the highest levels of the GOI.

*Question.* On September 16 the last major relocation of residents from Camp Ashraf to Camp Hurriya was successfully completed. But there remain concerns about the long-term safety of this group. What are the major humanitarian challenges for finding long-term solutions for the residents, and how can the U.S. Embassy and the Iraqi Government work together to overcome those obstacles?

*Answer.* The relocation of former Ashraf residents out of Iraq will not be easy or a quickly accomplished process. However, the United Nations (U.N.) and international community are turning their full attention to the task now that the major relocations from Ashraf have been completed. At Camp Hurriya, the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) continues an identity verification and refugee status determination process for the relocated residents. Embassy Baghdad, in support of the UNHCR process, is working closely with the diplomatic community in Baghdad to intensify efforts and if confirmed, I would be personally involved in these engagements, if confirmed as next Ambassador to Iraq. My colleagues in the Department are also working diligently with foreign governments to encourage them to help in the permanent resettlement of the former Ashraf residents.

With regard to their current situation, the Government of Iraq, the U.N. Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), and UNHCR—all with our support—continue to cooperatively address humanitarian concerns raised by the residents. For example, Iraqi authorities managing the relocation efforts have facilitated the transfer of a variety of property from Ashraf, ranging from televisions and computers to water storage tanks and other life support items. Additionally, in response to residents' concerns over access to a sustainable water source, Iraqi authorities are working with the residents to connect Camp Hurriya to a nearby reservoir. Also, Camp Hurriya residents have access to U.N. human rights monitors around the clock.

My colleagues at Embassy Baghdad have worked tirelessly to see the relocation effort from Ashraf to Hurriya concluded peacefully and safely. We will continue to visit Hurriya regularly, and, if confirmed, I will remain committed to seeing this issue through to humane and secure solutions for the individuals at Camp Hurriya.

---

RESPONSES OF STEPHEN BEECROFT TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED  
BY SENATOR JAMES M. INHOFE

*Question.* Considering that under the Saddam regime, minority and opposition groups were attacked using Soviet aircraft and helicopters, many Sunni, Shia, and Kurd communities fear it will happen again with U.S.-made aircraft. What safeguards has the United States placed on U.S. arms transfers to Iraq to prevent U.S. origin weapons and equipment from being used against Iraqi minority and opposition groups? What controls have been placed specifically on U.S. origin aircraft and associated munitions to ensure misuse does not occur?

*Answer.* We have encouraged and continue to encourage Iraqi leaders to settle their differences through the political process in accordance with the Iraqi Constitution without resorting to violence.

To achieve our strategic objective of a sovereign, stable, and self-reliant Iraq that contributes to peace and stability in the region, we will continue to responsibly support Iraq's efforts to develop capable Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) that adhere to the rule of law and respect human rights. We support Iraq's efforts to purchase defense equipment to meet its legitimate defense needs, in line with its domestic spending priorities and in accordance with its budget laws and procedures.

In reviewing security assistance programs and export licenses for U.S.-origin defense articles to any country, the United States takes into account a full range of foreign policy, national security, and human rights considerations. We consider a variety of factors, including consistency with arms control initiatives and agreements, appropriateness of the transfer in responding to legitimate U.S. and recipient security needs, internal political stability, and regional stability interests.

In addition, all equipment provided under our security assistance programs or sales is subject to end-use restrictions and conditions. Embassy Baghdad has implemented robust End Use Monitoring programs: "Blue Lantern" (State program) and "Golden Sentry" (DOD program). These programs require routine inspections to ensure there are no unauthorized transfers of arms and equipment.

*Question.* What initiatives or programs has the United States continued with minority security forces, such as the Kurdish Peshmerga, now that all U.S. forces have withdrawn from Iraq?

*Answer.* The Department of State is continuing a Department of Defense (DOD) effort to professionalize security forces in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and to integrate them into the central government's Iraqi Security Forces. Earlier this year, the Department approved a program, fully funded by the DOD's Iraq Security Forces Fund (ISFF), to train and equip the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) Regional Guard Brigades (RGBs).

Additionally, the Department of State's Police Development Program (PDP) and its Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) program provide assistance to the KRG's police forces. The PDP provides training on criminal investigations, information technology and communication, professional development, and border security. The ATA program provides training in VIP protection, critical incident management, and explosive incident countermeasures.

*Question.* Recent reports indicate Iran has been using Iraqi airspace to transfer weapons to the Assad regime because the Iraqi Air Force doesn't have a capability to defend its territory. What confidence does the United States have that the Iraqi Government will use its newly acquired F-16s to protect its airspace and enforce U.N. sanctions against Iran and Syria? Is the Department of State providing foreign military aid for border patrol and air sovereignty training that includes arms smuggling scenarios?

*Answer.* The sale of F-16s and other military equipment is part of our long-term vision for a strategic partnership with Iraq. Iraq's F-16s are currently scheduled for delivery in September 2014. These aircraft will play a key role in helping Iraq protect its airspace, defend its sovereignty, and deter or counter regional threats. We believe the Government of Iraq can play an increasingly positive role in preserving regional stability, and this is one of the points that we stress to the Iraqis in pressing them to fully implement U.N. sanctions against Iran.

Air sovereignty and border security are legitimate defense requirements for Iraq. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) subject matter experts, through the Police Development Program, continue to support key ministries responsible for border security, including the Ministry of Interior, to achieve a level of self sufficiency in their operations and relevant training requirements. Should the Iraqis request additional border patrol or air sovereignty training aimed at arms smuggling scenarios in the future, the Department would review such a request under our Conventional Arms Transfer Policy, taking into account a number of factors ranging from regional security and nonproliferation to human rights. Some of the equipment which Iraq has purchased through a combination of host nation funding and Department of Defense-provided Iraqi Security Forces Funds (ISFF) will help Iraq confront a variety of security challenges including arms smuggling.

*Question.* Now that the last major group of residents from Camp Ashraf, home to 3,200 members of the Iranian opposition group, the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK), have relocated to Camp Liberty, what specific steps is the United States taking in ensuring the safety and security of the residents now in Camp Liberty?

*Answer.* In my capacity as Chargé d'affaires in Baghdad, my colleagues and I are fully engaged in ensuring the safety and security of the residents at Camp Hurriya (Liberty). Embassy Baghdad officers continue to visit Hurriya regularly and speak with the residents. My colleagues and I also work closely with U.N. and Iraqi officials regarding Hurriya. If confirmed, I will remain attentive to the situation at both Ashraf and Hurriya and remain in active, regular contact with both the U.N. and the Government of Iraq in support of completing a peaceful and safe relocation process. In addition, Embassy Baghdad officials will continue to observe movements at both Ashraf and Hurriya and to monitor relocations as they take place.

*Question.* As one of your first acts as Ambassador, if confirmed, will you convey to the Maliki government, that the Iraqi Government must ensure the safety, security, and dignity of all the residents of Camp Liberty so long as they are in Iraq?

*Answer.* In my capacity as Chargé d'affaires in Baghdad, I have personally engaged with Prime Minister Maliki and senior Iraqi officials to work to ensure the safety, security, and dignity of the residents of Camp Hurriya (Liberty). The United States has publicly supported a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Government of Iraq and the United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) that in part calls on the Iraqi Government to provide for the safety and security of Hurriya. If confirmed, I will continue to urge the Government of Iraq at the high-

est levels to continue to abide by the MOU and ensure the security of the residents of Hurriya.

*Question.* As one of your first acts as Ambassador, if confirmed, will you focus and work toward a permanent and just resolution to the MEK issue?

*Answer.* In my capacity as Chargé d'affaires in Baghdad, I take the greatest interest in working toward a permanent and just resolution to the MEK issue. My colleagues and I at Embassy Baghdad are fully engaged in the relocation process and in ensuring the safety of the residents of Camp Hurriya (Liberty). If confirmed, I will continue to work with all sides at the highest levels to bring this issue to a peaceful resolution.

---

RESPONSES OF ROBERT STEPHEN BEECROFT TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED  
BY SENATOR ROBERT MENEZES

*Question.* Mr. Beecroft, as you assume the critical role of Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq, what are the administration's priorities as we transition from a military to civilian assistance role? How do we continue to encourage the Iraqi people to follow the path toward democracy and religious tolerance?

*Answer.* Progress in Iraq remains critical to U.S. national security. We are dedicated to supporting a sovereign, stable, and self-reliant Iraq that can be a partner to the United States.

Our relationship with Iraq is one of our most strategically important bilateral relationships. Our direct engagement with the Iraqi Government and people has remained robust since the departure of USF-I. As Chargé d'affaires, I have regularly engaged with President Talabani, and Prime Minister Maliki and my colleagues meet with cabinet ministers, parliamentarians, and civil society leaders throughout Iraq.

The administration's priorities in Iraq include supporting a unified federal democratic Iraq, fighting AQI and supporting human rights. We are working with Iraq to help develop their economy and Iraq's oil resources while promoting and increasing U.S. business engagement in Iraq. If confirmed, I will do my best as Ambassador to further these objectives. We remain focused on strengthening Iraq's democratic institutions and ensuring that their voices determine the future direction of their country. Part of our work to help build Iraq's democratic institutions is our continued support for the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC). We continue to work closely with the government and with IHEC in preparation for provincial elections in 2013 and parliamentary elections in 2014.

As part of our larger effort to promote religious freedom in Iraq, Secretary Clinton appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Iraq, Barbara Leaf, to serve as the Coordinator for Iraq's Religious and Ethnic Minorities. DAS Leaf has traveled to Iraq to meet with these communities and, along with the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, Ambassador Suzan Johnson Cook, has engaged Iraq's Christian diaspora communities in the United States. Our Embassy in Baghdad continues to meet frequently with minority religious and community leaders to discuss their concerns and to determine ways the U.S. Government can assist. To date, we have provided over \$72 million in targeted assistance to Iraq's minority communities. Projects have provided short-term humanitarian assistance as well as long-term economic development to help create and secure the environment for these communities to remain in Iraq and promote their rightful place in the social fabric of Iraqi society. We have also focused on strengthening the ability of Iraq's minority communities to receive the full attention and support of their own government through the Iraqi Minority Parliamentary Caucus. We believe these efforts are critical to strengthening the relationship between minority communities and their government and are critical to helping these communities secure their rightful place within Iraq's social fabric.

*Question.* For over 25 years, Camp Ashraf in Iraq was the home to more than 3,000 Iranian refugees. As provided for under the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Iraq last December, the residents of Camp Ashraf began the transition to Camp Hurriya early this year, with the seventh convoy arriving on September 16. It is my understanding that, over the coming weeks, the small group temporarily remaining at the former Camp Ashraf will soon be making the final trip to Camp Hurriya.

It has come to my attention that there remain unresolved and legitimate concerns regarding the humanitarian conditions at Camp Hurriya.

- As Ambassador, will you commit to visiting the facilities at Camp Hurriya and meeting with its residents? Will you ensure that their concerns are addressed, to the best of your abilities?

Answer. We take the greatest interest that the residents of Camp Hurriya have access to facilities that meet international humanitarian conditions. At Camp Hurriya, the High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) continues a verification and refugee status determination process for the relocated residents, and U.N. monitors are accessible round-the-clock. UNHCR and the U.N. Human Rights Office in Baghdad have determined facilities at Camp Hurriya, the previous home of U.S. troops stationed in Baghdad, to be in accordance with international humanitarian standards. A recent tour of the facilities found adequate electricity to power flat-screen televisions, sufficient water (residents receive on average in excess of 200 liters per person per day of water), landscaped grounds and fresh produce. There continue to be some complaints by the residents at Hurriya, but we have seen progress between the residents and the GOI on finding practical solutions to these issues.

U.S. Embassy Baghdad officers continue to visit Hurriya regularly and speak with the residents, and with U.N. and Iraqi officials regarding Hurriya. If confirmed, I will ensure that we remain attentive to the situation at both Ashraf and Hurriya and remain in active, regular contact with both the U.N. and the GOI in support of completing a peaceful and safe relocation process. I will make every effort to personally visit Camp Hurriya at the earliest, appropriate opportunity.