

Statement of Christopher Henzel
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Yemen
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
December 4, 2018

Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Menendez, Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to serve as Ambassador to the Republic of Yemen. I am grateful to the President for his nomination and to Secretary Pompeo for his continued trust and confidence. I welcome the opportunity to discuss Yemen and ask that my full testimony be submitted for the record.

First, I want to start by publicly thanking my amazing wife Adrienne, and our children Claire, Brendan, and Joseph, who have shared with me the rewards and hardships of Foreign Service life. I have had the privilege of serving as a Foreign Service Officer for nearly 33 years, currently as Charge D'Affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh and have spent most of my career focusing on the Middle East and Muslim world. Without their support none of this would have been possible.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Menendez, Members of the Committee, if confirmed, I will work to advance our country's key foreign policy and national security interests in Yemen. I will work to support the United Nations (UN)-led efforts towards a negotiated cessation of hostilities and a comprehensive peace agreement in Yemen; bolster U.S. security cooperation with the Yemeni government and other partners to foster greater regional and global stability; support efforts to address the dire humanitarian consequences of the conflict in Yemen; and ensure the safety and security of U.S. citizens and employees under Chief of Mission authority.

The Office of the United States Ambassador to Yemen operates out of the Yemen Affairs Unit located at the United States Embassy in Riyadh, with monitoring offices in Jeddah and Amman, due to the security situation in Yemen, which is now entering a fifth year of conflict. This protracted war has exacerbated the world's largest food insecurity emergency and cholera epidemic, and created an economic crisis. The conflict has drawn in neighboring states, has led to collapsed state institutions, local power vacuums and ungoverned spaces that the Houthis and terrorists have exploited to threaten important partners in the region, and has threatened U.S. national security interests, as well. The war in Yemen has complicated our ongoing counterterrorism efforts and has facilitated Iran's ambitions, further threatening regional stability. If confirmed, I will continue the work of my predecessor and continue to engage with and support the internationally recognized Republic of Yemen Government (ROYG), including President Hadi and the Prime Minister and cabinet members now operating in Aden and Riyadh, as well as the other governments supporting it.

The Administration's position on bringing an end to the conflict in Yemen is clear: only a negotiated settlement can end this protracted war and unify Yemen. If confirmed, I will fully support UN Special Envoy to Yemen, Martin Griffiths' efforts to press for a cessation of hostilities, particularly in the western port of Hudaydah, and to begin negotiations towards reconciliation, a comprehensive peace agreement, and a representative government. It is also imperative that we continue to urge all parties to allow commercial goods and humanitarian aid and supplies to continue to flow through this crucial port to reach the Yemeni people—something I know this Committee has been very active on.

In early November, the Administration announced that we would cease refueling Coalition aircraft after the Government of Saudi Arabia notified the United States that it no longer required our assistance. At our urging, the Saudi-led Coalition incorporated the No-Strike List into its target development procedures; stopped the use of cluster munitions; changed its rules of engagement to incorporate some U.S. recommendations; established the Joint Incident Assessment Team; and now primarily utilizes precision-guided munitions, which can help decrease civilian casualties and collateral damage. However, the United States will continue to focus on working with the Coalition and the ROYG to minimize civilian casualties and expand urgent humanitarian efforts throughout the country.

The United Nations estimates that 22.2 million Yemenis, 80 percent of the population, are in need of assistance. An estimated 14 million people could face severe food insecurity if conditions worsen. The United States is among the top humanitarian assistance donors to Yemen, providing more than \$697 million in FY 2018, which includes nearly \$131 million in additional emergency food assistance the Secretary announced November 27. Our continued assistance is critical to preventing famine-level conditions. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department of State will continue to play a pivotal role in stabilization and governance capacity building in areas of Yemen under ROYG control. USAID efforts include promoting social protection programs to create job opportunities, providing technical assistance to the Central Bank of Yemen to strengthen this critical pillar of the Yemeni economy, and investing in Yemen's education system by feeding more than 900,000 Yemeni children daily and putting over two million children back in school. USAID will also support the recovery of Yemen's health system and repair infrastructure to provide potable water and reduce the likelihood of further devastating cholera outbreaks.

Developing stabilization and governance capacity building in areas of Yemen under ROYG control in order to enhance Yemenis' capacity to manage conflicts at the local level is also critical. Looking ahead, once a peace agreement is reached, experts project that there could be over one million former combatants in Yemen. To prepare for this, the Department is planning long-term engagement on post-conflict Security Sector Reform and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Re-integration needs. If confirmed, I

will also continue our security cooperation programming with the ROYG and the Saudi-led Coalition to strengthen the counter-smuggling and counterterrorism capacity of Yemeni forces, in addition to their maritime defense and customs and border protection capabilities. While Coalition efforts in eastern and southern Yemen have produced measurable gains, Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Islamic State in Yemen (ISIL-Y) continue to use Yemen as a safe haven, seizing every opportunity to expand their operations. We must also continue to strengthen U.S.-Yemeni coordination in the fight to defeat terrorism by continuing strong U.S. support for programs that develop the capability of our partners within Yemen's security forces, counter violent extremism, and build the capacity of law enforcement for a future unified Yemen.

A unified and prosperous Yemen, at peace with itself and its neighbors, is critical to stability in the Gulf region and safe navigation in the vital waterways of the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab. The United States will continue to lead the international community's response to mitigate the humanitarian crisis, while helping to build a stronger foundation for durable peace by strengthening Yemeni systems, including government, civil society, and private sector institutions that reduce conflict.

We must prepare ourselves to have a strong presence in a unified Yemen, despite future threats that may be posed by the efforts of rebuilding and unification.

Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Menendez, I am grateful for the opportunity to appear before you today and I look forward to answering your questions.