

**Statement of Kathleen Hill**  
**Ambassador-Nominee to the Republic of Malta**  
**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
**December 2, 2015, 2 p.m.**

Chairman Johnson, Senator Shaheen, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

It is an honor to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as the next United States Ambassador to Malta. I look forward to working with Congress and this committee to advance U.S. interests in Malta.

I am deeply grateful to the President and Secretary Kerry for the trust they have placed in me by nominating me for this position. As a career Foreign Service Officer, I am truly humbled by the opportunity to serve my country as Ambassador. I also am very thankful for the support of my family, my mother Mary Ann, my sister Renea and her family, including her husband Neil and daughters Maura and Colleen, who are all here today and my other niece, Grace, in California. As with all Foreign Service families, both immediate and extended, it is their encouragement that helps sustain us as we serve our country in the farthest reaches of the world.

For two and half years, I managed Secretary Kerry's travel, visiting more than 60 countries and witnessed the incredible value of diplomacy and how every country can be a partner to reach our common goals, such as security, prosperity, and promoting democratic values. I hope to incorporate what I've learned in strengthening our partnership with Malta in these areas. During my 20-year career I have served three tours in southern and southeastern Europe. More recently, I led the Arab Spring evacuations of Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt, which gave me extensive experience working on the key issues of Mediterranean countries -- regional security and refugees. In every position I have held, I have encouraged teamwork, empowerment, and staff development to achieve success. If confirmed, I plan to implement that same formula for success at our mission in Malta.

Ties between the United States and Malta date back to the early nineteenth century when Valletta, one of the finest natural harbors in the Mediterranean, was the base for the U.S. Navy's action against the Barbary pirates. Malta's location continues to position the country as a significant actor in maintaining security in the Mediterranean. As a member of the European Union and the Schengen Treaty, Malta is responsible for enforcing the Schengen zone's common border and EU customs control. It also sits in the middle of the world's busiest shipping lanes, with over a third of the world's shipping transiting the waters between Malta and Italy.

Malta is a close ally to the United States and supports us on regional issues in North Africa and Europe. During the period of unrest in Libya that began in February 2011, I witnessed first-hand the important role Malta played in supporting the evacuation of more than 20,000 foreign nationals, including 200 American citizens; coordinating humanitarian aid to the people of Libya; and providing assistance to international forces. Shortly thereafter, Embassy Valletta hosted the State Department's Libya External Office before it moved to Tunisia; the Government of Malta supported the External Office's presence by accrediting our increased staffing.

A participant in the NATO Partnership for Peace since 2008, Malta remains a steadfast partner in defense. U.S. Navy ships visit on a semi-regular basis while the Maltese military actively participate in regional exercises on search and rescue, regional maritime awareness, and security.

We also work closely with Malta to address irregular migration. The U.S. Coast Guard has trained the Armed Forces of Malta to operate and navigate fast response boats and patrol vessels, in order to provide assistance to refugees and support to law enforcement operations.

On our bilateral defense cooperation, the United States and Malta do not have a status of forces agreement (SOFA), which limits the parameters of further engagement. If confirmed, I will continue to highlight the strategic defense and economic benefits of a SOFA with senior Maltese political leaders, and influential

business and commercial leaders. A SOFA would facilitate more regular ship visits and further enhance security cooperation between our two countries.

If confirmed, I will continue the work of my predecessor in supporting and encouraging further bilateral trade, currently valued at more than \$1 billion. It is estimated that one out of every 30 jobs in Malta is linked to a U.S. business. Our Mission will continue to support the SelectUSA initiative and work to advance and expand the ability of U.S. businesses to invest in Malta, a conduit for markets in Europe and North Africa. I believe U.S. foreign direct investment should be encouraged in Malta's thriving service-based industries, as well as its manufacturing and transshipment sectors. I also intend to continue raising awareness on the mutual benefits of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP).

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I would like to thank you again for this opportunity to appear before you. If confirmed, I will dedicate myself to representing the best of the United States in Malta and working with a valued and historic partner to advance U.S. foreign policy. I look forward to answering your questions.