

Testimony of Philip Kosnett
Ambassadorial Nominee to the Republic of Kosovo
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
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Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Murphy, it is an honor to appear before the Committee today as the President's nominee as Ambassador to the Republic of Kosovo. I deeply appreciate the trust and confidence the President and the Secretary of State have placed in me to represent the American people, and I hope to earn your trust as well. I am accompanied today by my wife Alison Kosnett, a development professional who has served with me in Iraq, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkey.

The U.S. relationship with Kosovo is rock-solid. Kosovo credits the United States as its closest strategic partner. Kosovo remains staunchly pro-American, and our partnership is rooted in a shared belief that a sovereign, democratic Kosovo is essential to Balkan stability. Having served in Kosovo earlier in my career, I have experienced for myself the deep connection between the people of Kosovo and the United States.

The U.S. investment in Kosovo has yielded concrete results. Since 1999, \$1.9 billion in U.S. assistance has helped Kosovo build institutions, achieve the highest GDP growth in the region every year since 2015, and improve integration of minority communities. Thanks to U.S. advocacy, over 100 countries now recognize a sovereign, independent Kosovo. U.S. businesses have found Kosovo a welcome environment for building world-class highways, opening franchises, and developing a \$1.4 billion power plant that will revolutionize Kosovo's economy.

Despite its notable achievements, Kosovo continues to face challenges, which impact U.S. interests in the Balkans and beyond. If confirmed, I will lead a whole-of-government effort to help Kosovo overcome these obstacles, focusing the work of the Embassy on several priority areas:

Enhancing Dialogue with Serbia

The U.S. government's most pressing priority is normalization of Kosovo's relationship with Serbia, which would bolster regional stability and pave the way for both countries' Western integration. The United States strongly supports the EU-facilitated Dialogue, and welcomes the intensification of high-level talks. If confirmed, I will encourage Kosovo to pursue a resolution that improves the lives

and ensures the safety of all citizens of Kosovo and Serbia. NATO's KFOR mission, trusted by Albanians and Serbs alike, and in which U.S. forces play a leadership role, remains essential to providing the stability and security necessary to allow these negotiations to take place.

Countering Corruption and Strengthening Rule of Law

Corruption in Kosovo remains endemic. Strengthening the rule of law is essential to attracting foreign investment and increasing public trust in Kosovo's institutions. If confirmed, I will focus on improving transparency and will press the government to combat political influence in the justice sector. Justice for victims of all ethnicities remains vital and a prerequisite for reconciliation. If confirmed, I will urge the government to support the work of the "Special Court" in The Hague to deal responsibly with Kosovo's past.

Supporting Human Rights and Minority Integration

If confirmed, I will actively support the protection of Kosovo's rich heritage and will hold officials to account when they fail to uphold Kosovo's rigorous legal protections for human rights. I will continue the Mission's focus on increasing inter-ethnic cooperation, ensuring equal access to justice and services for all of Kosovo's citizens, including minorities.

Combatting Terrorism and Violent Extremism

With U.S. support, Kosovo has become a regional leader in counterterrorism. Since 2015, Kosovo has arrested over 200 individuals suspected of supporting terrorism and 20 NGOs with extremist links have been closed. If confirmed, I will continue our broad collaboration with Kosovo in confronting this challenge.

Enhancing Kosovo's Capabilities for Self-Defense

Like any country, Kosovo has the sovereign right to establish armed forces for its defense. The United States supports transition of the Kosovo Security Force into a NATO-interoperable army with a limited defense mandate. Kosovo should remain in close coordination with us and continue its outreach to Kosovo Serbs to ensure a successful transition. If confirmed, I will work with NATO Allies and Kosovo to create a Kosovo Armed Forces that is capable, inclusive, and a positive element for regional stability.

Developing Energy Security

Unreliable energy costs the Kosovo economy \$415 million annually, or roughly six percent of GDP. If confirmed, I will advocate for implementation of Kosovo's comprehensive energy security strategy, which includes a diversified portfolio of

traditional and renewable fuels. U.S. support for this effort includes a \$49 million Millennium Challenge Corporation threshold program to encourage greater energy efficiency and develop new power sources, and for the aforementioned U.S.-designed power plant.

IN CONCLUSION

Kosovo's emergence as an increasingly stable, confident, and prosperous democracy – a reliable partner in the pursuit of common security and economic interests – is a success story for American diplomacy. If confirmed, I will work with the government and people of Kosovo, with the exceptional interagency team at Embassy Pristina, with partners in the Administration and in the Congress, with American businesses and NGOs, and with international counterparts to realize the vision of a democratic and stable Kosovo.

I thank you for your time and would be pleased to take questions.