

STATEMENT OF DANA SHELL SMITH
AMBASSADOR DESIGNATE TO THE STATE OF QATAR
SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
JUNE 11, 2014

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Corker, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as the President's nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador to the State of Qatar. I am extremely grateful to President Obama and to Secretary Kerry for their confidence in me. If confirmed, I look forward to representing the American people, and to working with this Committee and other interested Members of Congress to advance U.S. interests in Qatar. It is a privilege to share this hearing with Stu Jones and Steve Beecroft, two of our finest ambassadors whose work I have long admired. I look forward to working closely with them.

It has been an honor to serve as a Foreign Service Officer since 1992, mostly in the Arab World, and to use my regional experience and the Arabic language in a wide variety of assignments. The Foreign Service even introduced me to my husband, Ray Smith, who is here today, an agent with the Diplomatic Security Service. As a tandem couple we have been fortunate to serve together and to raise a family while pursuing careers we love. Our two children are also with me here today. They have learned so much from living overseas, and should I be confirmed, I know that Qatar will serve as an incredible educational and cultural experience for them. They have been great sports moving as often as they have, and I am very proud of them.

Qatar is playing a growing role in the international community with influence that extends far beyond its 4,400 square miles and 250,000 citizens. As President Obama has said, "If our two countries are communicating frankly and constructively, and pursuing common strategies, we can be a force for good for the entire region and for a vision of a Middle East that is democratic, that is prosperous, that is tolerant, that is representative of all peoples, and that is a force for good around the world." We enjoy a productive relationship with Qatar on key regional issues ranging from Syria to Iran. Qatar has been extremely supportive of our government's commitment to find a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; Qatar agrees that peace between Israelis and Palestinians would advance security, prosperity, and stability in the Middle East. If confirmed, I will work to ensure

that our policies and diplomatic platform advance U.S. foreign policy and national security interests in Qatar and the region more broadly.

Defense cooperation is a central pillar of our partnership and is best reflected in Qatar's hosting of U.S. Central Command Forward Headquarters, the Combined Air Operations Center, and the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing at Al Udeid Air Base. Al Udeid plays a critical role in advancing our regional security as the platform for U.S. air operations in the CENTCOM Area of Responsibility, including for Afghanistan. The renewal in December 2013 of our Defense Cooperation Agreement with Qatar, governing interactions between U.S. and Qatari forces, is a further testament to the enduring security partnership enjoyed by our two countries. If confirmed, I will work to deepen our military ties and expand our regional security cooperation.

We have an active and productive dialogue with Qatar in the areas of counterterrorism and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Qatar has endorsed the Proliferation Security Initiative and is a founding member of the Global Counterterrorism Forum. In March 2013 Qatar hosted a Forum workshop to develop a plan of action for rule of law-based, community-oriented policing programs to counter violent extremism (CVE). Qatar has also pledged \$5 million to support the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund, the first public-private global fund to support local, grassroots CVE efforts. As violent extremists expand their operations in Syria, these efforts take on increased importance, and we are working with Qatar to improve the capacity of its counterterrorist financing regime and disrupt illicit cash flows, including through the provision of training.

The United States is also continuing efforts, together with Qatar and other regional partners, to support the moderate opposition in Syria. Qatar believes that Bashar al-Asad's murderous oppression of the Syrian people leaves him with no legitimacy to rule and Qatar shares our view that the crisis in Syria should be resolved through a negotiated political transition. Qatar is an active member of the London 11 Core Group on Syria and a strong supporter of the Syrian opposition. We are working closely with regional partners like Qatar to maximize the impact of our collective efforts to support the moderate opposition and address the humanitarian crisis.

Qatar has publicly welcomed the Joint Plan of Action reached between Iran and the P5+1 on Iran's nuclear program, and has made clear it supports U.S. efforts to negotiate a comprehensive agreement.

As we saw a few weeks ago, Qatar played an instrumental role in recovering Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl. Qatar's efforts in this regard are another testament to our partnership. With regard to the five individuals transferred to Qatar from Guantanamo in connection with Sergeant Bergdahl's release, the United States has and will continue to coordinate closely with Qatar. We are confident that the security measures that have been put in place, including restrictions placed on the activities of the individuals, will substantially mitigate any threat that the individuals may pose to our national security. The Amir personally provided his assurances to the President, and the Administration is confident that the Qataris have the capacity and will to deliver on the commitments made. If confirmed, I will ensure that my Country Team tracks closely and verifies that these commitments are being upheld. In this regard, I look forward to consulting with the members of this committee and their staff, if confirmed.

Our thriving commercial relationship with Qatar continues to grow, presenting tremendous opportunities for American business. Qatar plans to invest up to \$200 billion in preparation for hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup, and to date U.S. companies have performed exceptionally well in securing contracts for mega infrastructure projects, such as the new airport, port, metro system, roads and bridges. Qatar is one of our most important trading partners in the region, importing over \$5 billion in U.S. goods in 2013, and it is the fifth largest destination for U.S. exports in the Middle East. If confirmed, I will make it my priority to advocate for U.S. companies vigorously to ensure that we continue to seize the multitude of opportunities offered by the Qatari market.

Qatar's 2030 National Vision aims to transition to a knowledge-based economy, and critical to this effort is Qatar's development of a strong education sector. Qatar has served as a center of innovation in the region, in part thanks to its warm welcome of diverse academic institutions and think tanks, particularly U.S. institutions. Qatar's "Education City" is home to six U.S. universities, and Qatar has also welcomed the presence of U.S. institutes Brookings and Rand. Our partnerships in education have expanded dramatically, with the number of Qatari students choosing to study in the United States more than doubling over the past decade. Qatar's contribution of \$5 million to the J. Christopher Stevens Virtual Exchange Initiative will help equip more than one million youth with the skills they need to succeed in the 21st century through online educational exchanges between the U.S., the Middle East, and North Africa. If confirmed, I will work to expand our educational and cultural partnerships to promote enduring ties between our peoples for the next generation.

At a U.S. mission with employees from a variety of U.S. government agencies, my first priority, if confirmed, would remain at all times protecting the safety and security of the dedicated men and women at our mission as well as of all Americans living and working or traveling in Qatar.

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, Members of the Committee, it has been my privilege and great honor to spend my entire adult life in the service of our country, promoting and defending U.S. interests and values. If confirmed, I would welcome your views and insights on Qatar and the region and look forward to your visits to Doha. I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have for me today.

Thank you.