

**Testimony of Gentry O. Smith**  
**Nominee for Director of the Office of Foreign Missions**  
**March 10, 2015**  
**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be the next Director of the Office of Foreign Missions (OFM). I am profoundly grateful for the confidence the President and Secretary Kerry have demonstrated in nominating me for this unique and important position.

My entire professional life has been dedicated to public service. Beginning with my first career as a police officer in Raleigh, North Carolina, to my assignments at our embassies in Tokyo, Rangoon, and Cairo, and to my most recent role as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Countermeasures in the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, I have strived to improve the conditions in which my colleagues live and work. I believe my dedication and commitment in this regard will serve me well if given the opportunity to lead the Office of Foreign Missions, an organization whose primary goals are:

- Using reciprocity to ensure equitable treatment for United States diplomatic and consular missions abroad and their personnel;
- regulating the activities of foreign missions in the United States to protect our foreign policy and national security interests;
- protecting the U.S. public from abuses of privileges and immunities by members of the foreign missions; and
- the provision of service and assistance to the foreign mission community in the United States on a reciprocal basis.

As you are aware, OFM was established in 1982 as a requirement of the Foreign Missions Act. In passing the Act, Congress made it clear that the operations of foreign missions in the United States are a proper subject for the exercise of Federal jurisdiction.

For more than 30 years, the Act has guided the Department's management and extension to foreign missions in the United States, privileges and benefits associated with the acquisition and use of real property, motor vehicle and driving services, tax exemptions, customs clearances, and domestic travel courtesies and restrictions.

In my estimation, the Foreign Missions Act is a landmark piece of legislation which has positively influenced and conditioned the environment in which U.S. diplomatic and consular missions abroad operate.

This Committee is well aware of the Department's on-going efforts to ensure that our personnel abroad work in facilities that are safe, secure, and functional. I can authoritatively attest that the relocation of an American Embassy is a complex and challenging task. To accomplish this job, the United States must have the interest and support of the host government. In many countries, such support and assistance are there for the asking. In countries where support is lacking, OFM plays a critical role in assisting with the resolution of impasses we sometimes face with foreign governments during our attempts to acquire real property in their countries for the relocation and construction of our facilities.

When a country has an interest in improving or relocating one of its missions in the United States, OFM uses its ability to regulate the acquisition and use of real property by foreign missions as leverage to achieve the Department's own property-related needs in that country. Without OFM and the authorities it has under the Foreign Missions Act, we may not have been able to build the new U.S. Embassy in Beijing, or the new annex building under construction there. This and more was achieved as a result of reciprocity and the Foreign Missions Act.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I am honored to have the opportunity to address you and the esteemed Members of the Committee. If confirmed, I will do all that I can to further the important objectives Congress set out in the Foreign Missions Act, and I look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure proper treatment of our Foreign Service personnel abroad, and that foreign missions are good neighbors here at home.

Thank you for this opportunity and your consideration of my nomination. I respectfully request that my full statement be entered into the record, and I will be happy to answer your questions.