

**Statement of Alina L. Romanowski**  
**Nominee to be Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq**  
**Submitted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
**March 3, 2022**

Chairman Markey, Ranking Member Cruz, and members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq.

I want to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me, especially as a member of the career civil service. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this Committee to defend and advance our nation's interests in Iraq.

I am grateful to share this day with my family. My husband, a retired U.S. Navy submariner, and I raised two sons—one making his way in the financial investment world and the other expecting to serve our nation when he completes the U.S. Navy's Officer Candidate School next month. My parents, who came to the United States in their 20s, instilled in me a deep sense of service, respect, and humility and their guidance remains with me in spirit.

My more than 40 years of public service have taken me across the interagency in the Departments of State and Defense, USAID, and the intelligence community in positions mostly focused on the Middle East. If confirmed, I will draw on that broad experience to advance U.S. national security interests in Iraq and the region.

It is the greatest honor to be entrusted with strengthening our relationship with Iraq. From my many years of experience in the Middle East, especially in my current role as Ambassador to Kuwait, I know firsthand the importance of this critical strategic partnership.

Iraq remains a foreign policy priority for the United States and is a cornerstone of regional stability. The United States is committed to deepening its enduring partnership with the Iraqi people. As Iraq learns to manage the COVID-19 pandemic and continues to rebuild following the territorial defeat of ISIS, we are focused on bolstering Iraq as a sovereign, stable, secure partner, free from malign influence. We must stay engaged to ensure that Iraq can address internal and external threats, secure its borders, limit the influence of great power competitors, while respecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Iraqis. If confirmed, I will underscore the importance of Iraq charting an independent foreign policy and continuing cooperation with its regional neighbors to enhance its sovereignty, security, critical infrastructure, and economic development.

The United States supports a stable, prosperous, and democratic Iraq that serves all its citizens, including its most vulnerable and marginalized communities. If confirmed, I will continue to prioritize U.S. assistance programs that encourage durable solutions for Iraq's most vulnerable populations. Since 2018 alone, the United States has provided over \$500 million in assistance to support members of these communities. If confirmed, I look forward to meeting with these communities and addressing their concerns.

The United States continues to work with our Iraqi partners as they seek to strengthen their democratic institutions, responsive governance, and the rule of law. If confirmed, bolstering Iraq's independence and advancing citizen rights will be a top priority in my engagements with Iraq's new government. I will encourage Iraq's political, economic, and civil society leaders to focus on building a prosperous and resilient Iraq. I will also encourage further cultural and education exchanges between our two countries.

Economic reform is essential for Iraq to prosper. If confirmed, I will continue to press the Government of Iraq to diversify its economy, expand private sector growth, reduce corruption, improve transparency, and create new markets for U.S. exports. For example, I will vigorously advocate for Iraq to fulfill and even expand its arrangement to purchase U.S. rice and wheat.

Our security partnership with Iraq is an essential component of our relationship and stability in the region. The Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve has transitioned to an advise, assist, and enable mission in Iraq. It continues to provide the Iraqi security forces critical support for the enduring defeat of ISIS and retains the inherent right to self-defense. If confirmed, I will ensure that our security partnership continues to support security sector reform, D-ISIS stabilization, counterterrorism cooperation, and border security. We are invested in strengthening Iraqi security institutions, including the Peshmerga in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, to strengthen regional stability.

The Iraqi Kurdistan Region is considered an example of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. I am concerned, however, about backsliding in the area of human rights, in particular freedom of expression. If confirmed, I will work with our partners in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region to ensure they maintain their standing as an example, working towards political and economic reforms, all while anchored within federal Iraq.

Finally, if confirmed, I look forward to leading our Embassy in Baghdad. My highest priorities will be to strengthen the U.S.-Iraq partnership and most importantly, the safety and security of over 25,000 Americans who live and work in Iraq.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear here today and I look forward to your questions.