

**Opening Statement for Steven C. Bondy  
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Bahrain  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
October 5, 2021**

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Bahrain.

I am extremely grateful to the President – a fellow Fightin' Blue Hen of the University of Delaware – and to Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have shown in me with this nomination. It is the thrill of a lifetime to be in this position, and if confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this Committee and the Congress on the important foreign policy interests of the United States in Bahrain.

I would like to start by recognizing and thanking my wife Meghan, who has been a steadfast supporter and source of inspiration through thick and thin, including the two years I served in war zones. Our daughter Rachel is here today, and our son Drew is tuning in from Brooklyn. Rachel and Drew traveled the world with us and enrich our lives with their love and global perspective. My parents George and Enid Bondy are also watching today's proceedings from Daytona Beach. I owe them all more than I can say.

Mr. Chairman, I am excited at the prospect, if confirmed, of returning to a country where my family and I spent three wonderful years. Bahrain was a key part of the recent Operation Allies Refuge, facilitating and supporting over 7,000 Americans and others transiting the country on their way to the United States. Bahrain once again demonstrated it is not just a partner or an ally, it is a real friend.

The foundation of that friendship begins with our shared national security interests. The United States Navy has had an enduring presence in Bahrain since the 1940s, and it has been home to the U.S. Navy Central Command and Fifth Fleet since the Gulf War. Bahrain is a safe, secure, and welcoming home to the 8,500 U.S. military personnel in country and their families.

The United States works collaboratively with the Bahraini government to address threats to the internal security of the Kingdom, particularly from Iran. This joint security work helps keep safe American citizens, investments, and interests in the country. If confirmed, I will have no higher priority than protecting the safety and security of Americans in Bahrain.

Mr. Chairman, a year ago Bahrain and Israel signed the Abraham Accords agreement, shepherded by the United States. This bold act represents a change in the strategic orientation of the Kingdom, and it opened the door to Bahrain and Israel developing their relationship across a wide spectrum of shared interests. If confirmed, I will devote my energy and creativity to expanding and strengthening this relationship.

The President and the Secretary have been clear that human rights are at the center of our foreign policy. If confirmed, a primary focus of our bilateral engagement will be to advance respect for human rights and political participation, particularly as the 2022 parliamentary elections approach. We will continue to have open and honest exchanges with Bahrain on these important matters, recognizing both where more progress needs to be made, and where and when Bahrain has made meaningful progress.

Mr. Chairman, I was fortunate to be serving in Bahrain when our bilateral Free Trade Agreement entered into force in 2006. That agreement established a solid basis for our commercial relations, and American companies can play an important role as the Bahraini economy emerges from the Covid pandemic. If confirmed, I will advocate on behalf of American companies pursuing opportunities in Bahrain.

Mr. Chairman, the United States and Bahrain have a friendship that goes back almost 120 years, when intrepid Americans established the American Mission Hospital and related school in Manama. It will be my distinct honor, if confirmed, to build upon this legacy as the United States Ambassador to Bahrain. I welcome any questions you may have.