

**STATEMENT OF ALICE G. WELLS
AMBASSADOR DESIGNATE TO
THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN
SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
May 13, 2014**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Risch, Members of the Committee. It is a great honor, as well as the dream of every Foreign Service Officer, to appear before you, and today I am grateful and humbled to be the President's nominee to represent the United States in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. I would like to particularly thank Secretary Kerry for the confidence he has shown me.

I would not be here without the support of my husband and, until recently, fellow Foreign Service officer, Kurt Amend, and our daughters, Helen, Isabel and Phoebe. Our service in Tajikistan, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, India and Russia was a family affair, a great adventure, and a privilege, but not without its share of sacrifices. I am grateful to my husband and our girls for being enthusiastic participants in this Foreign Service journey. My brother, Tom Wells, my sister-in-law Paula, and their children Nicholas and Elizabeth, are also here today. Tom's military service to his country, including in Operation Desert Storm, is one chapter in my family's long engagement with the Middle East. Finally, my thanks to President Eisenhower, whose 1958 Middle East Task Force brought my father, then-Army Captain Wes Wells, and later my mother, Heidi Wells, to Lebanon. To my parents, I owe much more than my accident of birth in Beirut, but the extraordinary example of their public service, curiosity, and service to their country abroad.

As President Obama has stated, the United States has "very few friends, partners and allies around the world that have been as steadfast and reliable as His Majesty King Abdullah, as well as the people of Jordan." Mr. Chairman, the historic partnership between the United States and our invaluable ally Jordan has never been more important, as we jointly work to achieve peace in the Middle East and to promote a democratic transition in Syria. The United States and Jordan share concerns about destabilization in the region and increasing extremist activity. We have a strong history of mutual resolve and cooperation against terrorist threats, including in Afghanistan and Iraq, where King Abdullah directed that Jordan be part of the answer to restoring stability and countering the message of violent extremists.

At the same time, our multi-faceted partnership with the Hashemite Kingdom aims to demonstrate to the people of Jordan and the region the benefits of their choosing

the path of moderation, of political and economic reform, of peace with one's neighbors. As a testament to our support for Jordan, the Jordanian people, what Jordan stands for, and what it has achieved, in the 15 years since King Abdullah ascended the throne, the United States has provided over \$10 billion in assistance.

If confirmed as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, I will work to ensure that our assistance, our policies, and our diplomatic platform to advance U.S. interests and further Jordan's ability to withstand the Syrian crisis, counter terrorism, serve as an example of political and economic reform, and advance peace in the Middle East, while building bridges between U.S. and Jordanian societies.

First, with Jordan hosting 600,000 Syrian refugees, the United States has a strategic interest in ensuring that the Hashemite Kingdom can meet its international humanitarian obligations without jeopardizing its own economic and political stability. While international attention has focused on the Za'atri refugee camp, which several Committee Members and Staff have viewed firsthand, nearly 85 percent of Syrian refugees reside in Jordanian host communities. Local governments, social services, and civic organizations are severely strained, with cities and villages facing overcrowded schools, shortages of hospital beds and medicines, and an inability to stretch municipal services to accommodate the increased population. At the same time, Jordan grapples with the loss of export routes through Syria, a steep decline in tourism, negative investor sentiment resulting from the war, and an energy bill that rose to 21% of its GDP when Egypt could no longer deliver on its natural gas contracts.

In response to these needs, the U.S. government is providing Jordan with a broad package of aid designed to bolster services strained by the refugee influx and help safeguard Jordan's economic and political reform. Jordan was the fifth largest recipient of bilateral assistance in FY 2013. With strong, bipartisan support from Congress, U.S. support to Jordan has totaled over \$1 billion in both fiscal years 2012 and 2013. Our bilateral assistance alone will exceed \$1 billion in fiscal year 2014 thanks to the generosity of Congress. This assistance has helped to reduce the financial strain on the sectors directly affected by refugees. In addition, over the past few years we have provided more than \$268 million in humanitarian aid to international organizations and NGOs assisting Syrian refugees and host communities in Jordan, as well as a total of \$2.25 billion in loan guarantees to help Jordan access international capital. If confirmed, I will advocate continued flexibility in responding to the evolving crisis, adjusting our own assistance priorities and diplomatic staffing as necessary. I also will continue to work closely

with international donors and multilateral institutions to ensure a unified and coherent response that addresses Jordan's needs, while encouraging sensible reform to promote long-term economic sustainability and political stability.

Second, as violent extremists expand their operations in Syria and the Anbar province of Iraq, our cooperative efforts with Jordan on regional security and counterterrorism take on increased importance. Jordan offers practical partnership, as well as an alternative vision of a modern, Muslim country. The U.S. is utilizing a full array of programs, including the transfer of Excess Defense Articles, to strengthen Jordan's capabilities. This includes completing the Jordan Border Security Program, which uses advanced surveillance technologies to safeguard Jordan's border with Syria and Iraq, while working to stop the flow of foreign fighters and the financial networks that support them. In turn, Jordan's highly skilled security forces are playing a leadership role in training counterparts throughout the Middle East region and in peacekeeping missions around the globe. If confirmed, I also will look for additional opportunities to amplify King Abdullah's "Amman Message" of religious tolerance, as seen in Jordan's hosting of Pope Francis later this month, recognizing that interfaith dialogue and understanding are integral to repudiating the terrorist message and building tolerant, pluralistic societies across the region.

Third, the U.S. has a deep stake in Jordan's successful modernization and supporting King Abdullah's public embrace of political and economic reform as a "strategic choice." In Jordan, 70% of the population is under the age of 30 and almost 40% under the age of 14. We support the King's vision of promoting well-educated youth who can be an economic force multiplier. King Abdullah is in California today for meetings with U.S. investors and innovators to build greater economic ties and develop more jobs for the Jordanian people. To date, working with the International Monetary Fund, Jordan is successfully balancing competing demands, including the imperative of structural reforms that replace blanket subsidies with a targeted social safety net to alleviate popular discontent over fuel and electricity price hikes.

We also support the reforms advanced by King Abdullah to promote greater transparency and dignity, including the establishment of a National Integrity Commission, a Constitutional Court, limits on the State Security Court, and parliamentary elections that were judged credible by international observers. As friends of Jordan, we need to encourage the full implementation of these home-grown initiatives to reinforce the relationship between economic and political reform. King Abdullah has noted publicly that "for business to invest and expand

with confidence, they need a predictable, level playing-field, transparency and accountability, the rule of law and a strong, stable foundation of inclusive political life,” and we should encourage him to turn this vision into action.

I am committed to reinforcing the collaborative and consultative approach the U.S. has taken to help Jordan, whether in reforming its political system and reforming subsidies, diversifying its energy sector, renovating water infrastructure, extending education and enhancing the role of women, promoting international competitiveness and improving government service. The 2009-2014 MOU that provides \$360 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF) and \$300 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) annually has been integral to providing the predictability in assistance that Jordan needs to make strategic decisions and undertake difficult reforms. The President’s announcement in February of our intention to renew our MOU reflects the strength of our strategic partnership and our ongoing commitment to help Jordan successfully navigate the challenges posed by the regional unrest and build a stronger economy. For instance, if Jordan continues to adhere to its bold program of subsidy reform and diversification of its energy resources, by 2017 it has the potential to emerge from this crisis period with billions of dollars in budget savings.

Fourth, the United States relies on Jordan’s continued support, as a partner and a stakeholder, to achieve a comprehensive final status peace agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians. Secretary Kerry appropriately called Jordan “an essential partner for peace.” As one of only two Arab states to sign a peace treaty with Israel, the host to two million Palestinian refugees, and the traditional guardian of the Islamic holy shrines in Jerusalem, Jordan has a critical interest in any final status negotiations, as well as a role to play in any future security and border arrangement along the Jordan River. If confirmed, I will support continued engagement with Jordan on this important issue and seek to identify ways to enhance trade, environmental and other ties between Jordan and Israel, and Jordan and the West Bank, recognizing the historic role that initiatives like the Qualified Industrial Zones have played in forging linkages.

Finally, if confirmed, I will dedicate myself to building and sustaining a diplomatic team that can advance these ambitious objectives, while working to ensure the safety and security of U.S. officials and the American community. The U.S. Embassy in Amman has grown substantially over the last five years, reflecting Jordan’s regional importance and the Embassy’s role in providing support for our mission in Iraq and our interests in Syria. Last year, Embassy Amman hosted over 15,000 official visitors, both U.S. and other nationalities, including – I’m glad to

note – a total of 193 Members of Congress and staff. With the Embassy staffed to its physical capacity, choices will need to be made in prioritizing programs, as we anticipate the construction of a New Office Annex; similarly, we must remain nimble in responding to the evolving Syrian crisis. The safety and security of U.S. citizens and Embassy employees will always be the foremost priority, and I take the responsibility of managing risk seriously, recognizing the tension between security and engagement.

Mr. Chairman, in the course of my quarter century of service as a Foreign Service Officer, the world has changed dramatically. I entered the State Department with pretensions of being an expert on the Soviet Union, only to help open our first embassy in the independent and sovereign state of Tajikistan three years later. As a junior officer in Saudi Arabia, I waited three days for local media to report on Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, but now wrestle with the immediacy of the 24-hour news cycle and the imperative of social media. As Office Director for North Africa, I confronted the seeming permanence of Qadhafi, Ben Ali and Mubarak's leadership, only later to see the frustration and despair of a street vendor in Tunisia ignite a wave of unprecedented political change in the Middle East. However, what has not changed is the importance of U.S. leadership, the power of our example, and the resources we bring to bear. If confirmed, it would be an honor to help the U.S. chart a course in Jordan at this critical time that promotes our shared values and our shared interests in a more peaceful and prosperous region.