

**Statement of Paul Wohlers**  
**Ambassador-designate to the Republic of Macedonia**  
**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
**July 13, 2011**

Madam Chairman and Members of the Committee:

It is a privilege to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Macedonia. I am honored by the confidence placed in me by the President and Secretary Clinton. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this Committee and the Congress in advancing U.S. interests in Macedonia.

I am delighted and proud to be accompanied today by my family: my wife, Mary Jo, who has held our family together during multiple moves over almost 27 years in the Foreign Service; my three daughters and one son-in-law -- first, Rachel and her husband Ryan; then Julia; and Jessica. Foreign Service families are unsung heroes and true diplomats themselves -- my wife and daughters have been living, working, and going to school overseas for much of their lives, serving as examples of American values to their friends and colleagues, and sometimes, even at school, feeling the sting of criticism from those who did not agree with U.S. policies. My life would have been empty without my family, and I am thankful that they have always been by my side as we pursued a Foreign Service life together.

As you are aware, I have served previously in Macedonia, an experience which I believe will enhance my effectiveness as Chief of Mission, should you decide to confirm me. If confirmed, I will return to Macedonia during an important period. On September 8, Macedonia will mark the twentieth anniversary of its independence, and August 13 will be the tenth anniversary of the Ohrid Framework Agreement that ended the country's civil conflict in 2001. The Framework Agreement, concluded with U.S. and EU help, remains the foundation for Macedonia's peace and democratic development. The Agreement ended the conflict by addressing ethnic grievances through principles of equal rights for all citizens irrespective of ethnicity. Today, ten years from Ohrid and after 20 years of independence, Macedonia is working towards becoming a stable, multi-ethnic democracy.

There is much more to be done in Macedonia. The citizens of Macedonia deserve congratulations for the June 5 election in which the people turned out in high numbers and behaved peacefully and with dignity. Now is time for the people of Macedonia, along with their leaders, to focus on moving towards greater prosperity, security, stability, and Euro-Atlantic integration. While democratic structures are in place, full respect for the rule of law and independent institutions remains a problem. An independent judiciary, free and independent media, and

strong civil society are vital cornerstones for all democracies, and we have concerns about Macedonia's development in these areas.

The United States is a partner in confronting these challenges. Macedonia's continued reform and integration into the Euro-Atlantic community remains a priority. Macedonia became a European Union candidate country in 2005 and in December 2009 the European Commission recommended setting a start date for accession negotiations. Macedonia has also made strides in defense reform in order to meet NATO's performance-based standards for membership. At the November 2010 NATO Summit in Lisbon, Allies reaffirmed that Macedonia will receive an invitation to join the Alliance as soon as the dispute with Greece over the name is resolved. We will continue to support the UN process to help Macedonia and Greece find a mutually acceptable solution.

Macedonia has proven itself as a net provider of security as evidenced by its contributions both in the region and globally. Macedonian troops have served honorably in Iraq and Afghanistan. Indeed, Macedonia has been one of the highest per capita contributors to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. These contributions to regional and global stability reflect our shared values and the depth of our partnership with Macedonia.

If I am confirmed, my foremost priority as Ambassador will be promoting U.S. interests in Macedonia while working to advance Macedonia's own internal

transformation on the path to full Euro-Atlantic integration. I will continue to pursue the U.S. goals of strengthening the rule of law, fighting corruption, promoting economic growth and prosperity, and reinforcing democratic institutions.

Madam Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you. I would be pleased to answer any questions that you may have.