

**STATEMENT OF HENRY S. ENSHER
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THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA
SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
MAY 4, 2011**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Lugar, Members of the Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I am honored by President Obama's nomination of me to be U.S. Ambassador to Algeria. I deeply appreciate the confidence President Obama and Secretary Clinton have shown by making this nomination. If confirmed by the Senate, my number one goal will be to protect the people who serve the U.S. at our mission in Algiers and to protect the Americans who live and work in Algeria. I will work to advance critical U.S. foreign policy and national security interests in Algeria by using the full range of our diplomatic tools to promote security and economic prosperity. Both the President and the Secretary have emphasized the importance of outreach to civil society in countries of the region and, if confirmed, doing so will be a priority.

With your permission, I would like to introduce my wife Mona and our two sons Henry and Tariq. I would not be here today without their unwavering love and support. The service to our country in Iraq and Afghanistan that have kept me away from them for more than two years would not have been possible without Mona's steadiness and grace at home, even while she excelled at her own very important job.

The relationship between the United States and Algeria has never been stronger. As the third-most populous country in the Arab world, Algeria is the largest producer of oil and gas on the African continent, and an important supplier of energy to both the United States and Europe. Algeria also plays a critical role on the front lines countering violent extremism, and knows first-hand how important it is to maintain constant vigilance against those who wish to do us harm.

Like other countries in the region, Algeria has been impacted by events of the “Arab Spring.” President Bouteflika has recently announced important reforms of the Algerian system, and we look forward to their early implementation. Algerians will decide any next steps they wish to take and, if confirmed, I look forward to developing our relations with them as they continue to craft their own destiny.

Algeria exports nearly two million barrels of oil a day. The United States is by far Algeria’s largest trading partner, accounting for nearly a quarter of all hydrocarbon sales. However, when it comes to Algeria’s imports, the U.S. doesn’t even make it into the top five. While maintaining a constant flow of oil is critical, if confirmed I will work with American companies to develop Algerian partners to help them make use of Algeria’s considerable resources for their shared benefit.

Our relationship with Algeria is built on counterterrorism cooperation. President Bouteflika was the first Arab leader to call President Bush following the attacks on 9/11, which reflected our shared view of the dangers posed by terrorism and led to even greater cooperation. Algeria’s fight against violent extremism in the 1990’s cost tens of thousands of lives, imposing still more sacrifice on the Algerian people, who have such a long history of struggle to win and preserve their freedom and sovereignty. Actions of the government caused the level of violence to decrease, but Algeria knows as well as the United States that violent extremism remains a threat.

To further improve our bilateral cooperation, we recently kicked off a Counterterrorism Contact Group. Additionally, Algeria has taken a leading role in international cooperation on counterterrorism, and, if confirmed, I will encourage them to continue to do so.

Algeria has long had a significant role in Middle Eastern and African affairs. It is a key player in conflict resolution throughout the wider region. It is a leading member state of the Arab League, the African Union, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. It is a longstanding member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and a founding member of the New Economic Partnership for African Development. Its mediating role in conflicts in the Sahel will remain vital to finding peaceful solutions there. The “frozen conflict” over Western Sahara cannot be resolved without Algerian involvement. Not least, Algeria is literally at the confluence of Africa, the

Mediterranean, and the Arab world. It would gain from increasing trade within the region, and its willingness to lead in this area will be critical to realizing long-held dreams of regional integration.

Regarding the Embassy itself, our team has recently moved to a new, more secure facility, which is critical to our ability to promote our interests in an environment that still has the potential to be dangerous to us. To be clear, there has been a lot of improvement in our ability to operate freely in Algiers since I served there eleven years ago, but some necessary restrictions remain place. If confirmed, I will have no higher priority than the security and safety of the entire American community in Algeria. Thank you for this opportunity to address you today. I would be pleased to address any questions that you may have.