

Testimony for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Ambassador-designate Thomas C. Krajeski
September 21, 2011

Madam Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today. I want to thank President Obama and Secretary Clinton for nominating me to be Ambassador to the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Madam Chairman, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge my family members and colleagues here today.

For 32 years, I have served proudly the United States Government and the American people in the Middle East and Washington. If confirmed, I look forward to leading the Embassy Manama team, as we advance U.S. interests in the region and strengthen our bilateral relationship with Bahrain.

The United States and Bahrain have a long history of cooperation and partnership, based on mutual interests in regional security. If confirmed, I will make it a top priority to continue this partnership, while encouraging and supporting reforms that meet the needs and aspirations of Bahrain's citizens. I believe that these priorities are mutually reinforcing. Bahrain's long-term stability depends on addressing domestic grievances not through repression, but through genuine reform and reconciliation.

If confirmed, I will be working with our Bahraini partners to develop their ability to respond to external threats to the nation's security and ensure interoperability with our forces. An increasingly aggressive Iran makes this effort critically important.

Political reform and respect for human rights are vital to Bahrain's stability and to the protection of U.S. interests in the region. Bahrain has a long history of reform championed by King Hamad following his accession to the throne in 1999.

Given Bahrain's progressive record on democratic reform, and in the context of strong partnership, the U.S. remains deeply concerned by the events that have followed demonstrations in February and March of this year. Initially, the Bahraini government, led by the Crown Prince, called for dialogue with all parties.

But as protests turned increasingly confrontational, the government declared emergency law, requested the deployment of the Gulf Cooperation Council's forces, and began an internal security crackdown.

During this period of widespread arrests and trials of detainees before the so-called National Safety Courts, there were many credible reports of serious human rights abuses by security forces. The U.S. government has repeatedly emphasized to Bahrain's leadership the importance of taking steps to address these violations, restore public trust, and promote national reconciliation. Towards this end, King Hamad has taken steps to foster reform and resolve political differences.

Among these steps was a month-long National Dialogue, concluded at the end of July. On July 29, the King declared his support for all matters on which the Dialogue reached consensus, and ordered legislative and executive authorities to implement the Dialogue's recommendations for reform. We believe these are important first steps in bringing together Bahrainis from across ideological and sectarian lines.

Another initiative has been the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, led by internationally recognized legal experts. It has a broad mandate to investigate reports of violations of civil and human rights. The Commission will release a public report next month. We expect the Government of Bahrain to give serious consideration to the Commission's recommendations and take necessary action to ensure accountability for abuses, and to prevent any recurrences.

Madam Chairman, if confirmed, one of my top priorities will be to support and encourage these initiatives and others to advance the process of democratic and economic reform. This will strengthen Bahrain and strengthen our partnership.

Finally, Madam Chairman, if confirmed, my first priority will be the safety and security of all U.S. citizens who live, do business, and vacation in Bahrain. Our countries have benefited enormously from these exchanges, and I plan to encourage them. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.