

**Statement of John Desrocher**  
**Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to**  
**The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria**  
**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**July 26, 2017**

Chairman Flake, Ranking Member Booker, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored that President Trump has nominated me to be the U.S. Ambassador to Algeria, and I deeply appreciate the confidence he and Secretary Tillerson have shown by making this nomination. I am also very pleased that my wife, Karen, could join me here today.

If confirmed by the Senate, my first priority will be to keep safe the people who serve in U.S. Embassy Algiers, and the American expatriate community in Algeria. I will also work to advance three critical U.S. interests: (1) strengthening our bilateral security cooperation to fight terrorism and promote regional stability, (2) expanding bilateral trade and investment, and (3) working with Algerian counterparts as they pursue political and economic reforms that will foster stability as Algeria navigates new economic realities.

The U.S.-Algeria relationship has grown broader and deeper in recent years. Algeria's Foreign Minister visited Secretary Tillerson in Washington this May. In the last several years we have consulted extensively, at high levels and with broad interagency participation, regarding terrorism in North Africa. Our governments also hold bilateral Strategic Dialogues and Joint Military Dialogues on a recurring basis. Our Embassy in Algeria also facilitates a broad and ever-growing spectrum of bilateral cooperative programs that strengthen our security, economic, governance, educational and cultural ties. This speaks to the value that both of our countries place on our growing partnership.

From Algeria's fight against terrorism in the 1990s, it has achieved a hard-won stability, which it has maintained through rigorous counterterrorism efforts, national reconciliation programs, and de-radicalization initiatives. Algeria has also exported this peace dividend to its neighbors. I am consistently impressed by Algeria's efforts to foster political reconciliation in Libya and to align neighboring states in support of a political agreement. Algeria has also provided security assistance and training to other neighbors such as Tunisia and Niger.

As the largest country in Africa and situated in a volatile neighborhood, Algeria clearly recognizes the threat that regional unrest poses to its domestic security. Fighters from

Iraq and Syria returning to the region, smuggling networks, and organized criminal groups represent significant threats. Left unchecked, these threats have the potential to harm vital U.S. interests. For this reason, if confirmed by the Senate, I will work to expand our important bilateral security and counterterrorism relationship.

The U.S.-Algeria relationship is also growing in the economic and commercial spheres. The government has faced budgetary difficulties following the decline in global oil prices, as hydrocarbons account for most of its revenue. Yet, these challenges have given Algeria an opportunity to make important structural economic changes, promote private sector growth, as well as foreign investment. Last year, Algeria launched a new economic model to develop and diversify its domestic industries. It has also reevaluated state subsidy programs and explored new forms of financing.

The U.S. government has supported Algeria's economic transition. In January, the Treasury Department sent a technical advisor to Algeria to provide advice on efficient debt management and domestic debt market development. In April, our governments held the latest annual meeting of the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement Council, to identify ways to strengthen economic ties by reducing barriers to trade and investment. Additionally, our Embassy in Algiers supports U.S. firms in Algeria through commercial advocacy. In April, GE Power signed a services deal with Algerian utility Sonelgaz, valued at \$3.3 billion, to provide upgrades and long-term services for 10 gas plants throughout the country. Many other companies have also benefitted from U.S. Government advocacy, and, if confirmed, I will continue to prioritize this critically important function of our Embassy.

While new investments are essential, Algeria also remains one of the key regional producers of oil and gas, and it provides an essential energy lifeline to Europe and the Middle East. It ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in world gas reserves and 16<sup>th</sup> in oil reserves. As the United States has considerable expertise in the energy industry, if confirmed, I will promote U.S. companies as they seek to partner with Algerian firms to develop the energy sector.

Last year, the Algerian government adopted a package of constitutional reforms to strengthen Algeria's political system and enshrine freedom of religion. If confirmed, I will work with the Algerian government to solidify these important reforms, which will strengthen Algeria's democratic and social fabric. I am committed to continuing our outreach to key human rights, civil society and other non-governmental organizations in Algeria. I will also prioritize expanding social ties through new academic and people-to-people exchanges.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, ranking member Booker, and members of the committee, for giving me the opportunity to address you. It is a great honor to have been nominated as Ambassador to Algeria. If confirmed, I look forward to the opportunity to lead an active, talented mission at U.S. Embassy Algiers, as we work with Algeria to advance our shared interests.

I will be happy to take any questions you might have.