

**Testimony of  
Ambassador-designate to Tajikistan  
Susan Marsh Elliott  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
June 6, 2012**

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Tajikistan. I am grateful for the trust and confidence that the President and Secretary Clinton have placed in me with this nomination. If confirmed, I will work closely with you, the Committee, and the entire U.S. Congress to advance America's goals and interests in Tajikistan.

I would like to thank all of my wonderful colleagues, friends and family who have supported me over my 22-year career at the State Department. My son, Kurt Mitman, is here today. My husband, Matthias Mitman, is unable to be here because he is a career Foreign Service Officer serving as the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. He encouraged me to join the Foreign Service and has been my strongest advocate. I would not be here today without his love and support.

Since recognizing Tajikistan's independence and establishing diplomatic relations 20 years ago, the United States has supported Tajikistan's sovereignty and encouraged its development as a more prosperous, tolerant, and democratic

society. Shortly after its independence, when I first began working on Central Asia policy, Tajikistan was in the midst of a civil war. Today, the people of Tajikistan enjoy peace and stability. As Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Central Asia for the last two years, I often traveled to Tajikistan and developed a deeper understanding and appreciation for the importance of Tajikistan to U.S. foreign policy interests.

Tajikistan shares a long border with Afghanistan and has provided assistance to its neighbor to the south and to U.S. and Coalition efforts to stabilize the security situation there. Although the terrain is mountainous and the infrastructure is not well developed, Tajikistan plays an important role in the Northern Distribution Network that brings supplies to U.S. and Coalition forces in Afghanistan. It also provides vital air transit routes for U.S. and Coalition cargo and military personnel. A stable future for Afghanistan depends on continued progress to develop the road, rail and energy linkages with its Central Asian and other neighbors. Tajikistan co-hosted with the Government of Afghanistan in late March the fifth and most substantive and successful Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan to date. The conference achieved consensus on a concrete set of achievable projects and reform initiatives that can advance regional integration and provide new opportunities for private investment in this region. Likewise, greater peace, stability, and prosperity in Afghanistan

will contribute to stability and prosperity in Tajikistan and the other countries of Central Asia. If confirmed, I will encourage Tajikistan to maintain and expand, where possible, this important support.

Narcotics trafficking and terrorism plague Tajikistan's neighborhood. Over the years, U.S. cooperation with Tajikistan has grown in addressing these and other transnational challenges through engagement, assistance, and training. Currently we are working with the Government of Tajikistan to develop expanded counternarcotics cooperation with the goal of targeting organized traffickers, bringing them to justice and reducing the flow of narcotics through Tajikistan. If confirmed, I will work to further strengthen our partnership with Tajikistan to combat this flow of narcotics, and other illicit goods.

Tajikistan is the poorest country in Central Asia. The people and the government are working to improve their economy and aspire to be members of the World Trade Organization. If confirmed, I will encourage Tajikistan to develop its agriculture sector and improve the regulatory environment for foreign investment and trade. If confirmed, I will also continue encouraging Tajikistan to take the necessary steps to attract U.S. companies to help develop and diversify its economy with American expertise, goods and services.

My experience in the Foreign Service has taught me that long-term peace and stability are only possible when accompanied by respect for human rights, the

rule of law, the fostering of transparent and democratic governmental and civic institutions, and an open and free media environment. If confirmed, I will engage the government and people of Tajikistan to increase not only our bilateral security and economic engagement, but also continue our dialogue on human rights and civil society issues such as allowing freedom of the press and freedom of religion or belief.

The Obama Administration has established conditions for constructive dialogue and trust with the government and people of Tajikistan. Secretary Clinton visited Tajikistan in October of 2011. During her visit, she met with citizens of Tajikistan from all spectrums of society -- from human rights activists to religious leaders to members of the media, women leaders, students, and educators. While there, the Secretary noted that Tajikistan is home to courageous, dedicated, and talented people who want to help improve the prospects for Tajikistan's future. The Secretary stressed the importance for governments and leaders to provide the space necessary for citizens to have a voice in their governments, to pursue their aspirations, and promote their ideas. It is also important to ensure fundamental freedoms, including religious and media freedoms for all people -- men, women, young, and old. We believe that an open, democratic, tolerant society provides a firm foundation for a secure, stable, and prosperous nation. If confirmed, I will

encourage the Tajik government to take concrete steps toward continuing the development of that kind of society.

I recently participated in the third Annual Bilateral Consultations with Tajikistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, hosted in Washington, D.C. by the State Department's Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs Assistant Secretary Robert Blake. In these consultations we discussed openly and comprehensively a wide range of bilateral and multilateral interests, including counternarcotics cooperation, regional security, development assistance, economic development cooperation and human rights. If confirmed, I will continue working with the Government of Tajikistan to achieve positive results on these issues and others.

Finally, I know success in all aspects of our engagement depends on my taking a leadership role in encouraging and supporting a strong, dedicated embassy staff that coordinates closely with the Administration and Members of Congress. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing an active dialogue with you as we seek to advance America's interests with the government and people of Tajikistan.

Thank you.