

Statement of Peter Hoekstra
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
September 27, 2017

Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Murphy, and distinguished Committee Members, it is an honor to be with you today.

I am deeply appreciative of President Trump for the nomination to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. With your concurrence and approval, I look forward to beginning my work in the Netherlands and once again serving the people of the United States of America.

As those who have been a part of public service know, there are many individuals that have helped us achieve these opportunities. I would like to recognize Diane, my wife of more than 42 years, for her unconditional love and support. Our children, Erin, Allison, and Bryan, and daughter-in-law Rebecca, have been supportive throughout the joys and frustrations of having a congressman as a father. The time in public service was a special and rewarding time for all of us.

I'm also deeply appreciative of the support that Senators Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters have expressed. As a Michigan delegation, we always knew when to set aside partisan considerations and support our State and each other. As they have stated, in America politics stops at the water's edge. Thank you Senators Stabenow and Peters.

This is a special opportunity. I am a native Dutchman. I was born in the Netherlands in 1953. In 1956 my parents immigrated to the United States with their three young children. For them it was the beginning of an adventure in "the land of opportunity". They had some previous experience with Americans, as it was American and Canadian troops who liberated them and an occupied Netherlands in 1945, but this was a leap of faith.

My parents made the commitment that they would become "Americans", even changing the name of one of their children so that he would fit in.

We lived the American dream. My dad operated a small bakery. My mom was a stay-at-home mother. Their kids all graduated from college and 36 years later they saw their son sworn into the United States Congress. America has been all they had hoped for. For all of us, it became our new home.

The opportunity to go back and represent the United States to the Netherlands is a humbling opportunity. The Netherlands was the second country to formally recognize this newly born country in 1782. It supported the struggle for independence, supplying weapons and ammunition. The United States and the Netherlands have had an unbroken record of friendship going back more than 240 years. This is truly a unique and unbroken relationship.

The Dutch have and continue to be a strong economic partner. They are one of the largest foreign direct investors in the United States. The U.S. also enjoys the largest trade surplus in any bilateral relationship with the Netherlands, roughly \$24 billion. I recognize the strength of this relationship and will look at ways to build the economic ties even stronger for the benefit of both countries.

The Dutch have also been a strong military ally of the United States. In Margraten, a small Dutch town, the citizens have adopted the graves of 8,301 U.S. military personnel who paid the ultimate price in helping liberate the Netherlands and defeat the Nazi's in World War II. The Dutch have also been a full partner in the efforts to defeat the threat from terrorism. Twenty-five Dutch soldiers have died in the Afghan war. From the founding of our country, through many conflicts including today's, the two countries have always stood shoulder to shoulder, never against each other. That needs to continue as we face the threats of terrorism, Russia, and other unnamed future challenges.

Economically and militarily, it is difficult to find any ally who has stood by our side, hand in hand, for such a long period of time. As such, I recognize that the work of the men and women of the U.S. embassy in The Hague is a part of this long relationship with the Dutch. We will stand on the foundation laid by those who have served so effectively and diligently for the last 200 plus years. We will be entrusted to manage this relationship today and must leave it stronger and better than what we have been given.

We walk and work in the footsteps of the first US ambassador to the Netherlands, John Adams, and the thousands of individuals who have built this strong and special relationship through the years.

Personally, I look forward to working with those who have dedicated their lives to the foreign service. In my eighteen years in Congress, and especially my ten years on the Intelligence Committee, I observed the talents and the skills of our State Department professionals firsthand. Their knowledge of how to conduct foreign

policy is something that I have relied on in the past and will continue to rely on in the future. They are truly amazing people.

As a congressman, I have interacted frequently with the Dutch on trade, military and intelligence, and cultural issues. This position will enable me to build on that experience.

As an ambassador, I recognize the obligation of implementing the strategies and policies of the United States. These policies are established in Washington, D.C. I recognize the responsibilities that I have to the President and Secretary of State Tillerson; and as a man of the House, the responsibility to the Congress of the United States.

With your approval, I look forward to once again having the opportunity to serve this great country. Thank you very much for your time today. I look forward to answering your questions.