

**Statement of Rear Admiral Kenneth J. Braithwaite, USN (ret)**  
**Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Norway**  
**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**November 30, 2017**

Chairman Rubio, Ranking Member Menendez and Distinguished Members of the Committee: It is an honor and a privilege to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Norway. Words cannot adequately define how I feel, should I be confirmed, to be able to once again serve Our Great Nation and the People of the United States. I would like to thank President Trump and Secretary Tillerson for their confidence, faith and trust in me to serve as our nation's envoy to Norway. I can think of no greater honor than to be the principle representative of the United States to such an important strategic Ally.

I would also like to thank several mentors who have guided me directly and indirectly as I have developed in my service to our country; my first commanding officer Admiral Tom Lynch, former Superintendent of the Naval Academy; Ambassador Ryan Crocker under whom I served in Islamabad; and former Secretary of the Navy whom I met as a young Naval Officer and have remained in touch with throughout my career. Each of these individuals and so many others contributed to my development and continue to offer advice and guidance as I prepare with your support to serve again.

Finally and most especially, I wouldn't be here without my wife Melissa and our two children, Grace and Harrison, who are with me today to support me hopefully once again in service to our nation. I am reminded, as Senator Arlen Specter told me so many years ago when I worked for him, that the reason we serve is to ensure our children and our children's children inherit the same great country that we received from those who went before us. After 31 years in the uniform of our nation, I intend with your approval to once again do all I can to uphold that sacred responsibility.

Our relationship with the Kingdom of Norway is truly a special one for so many reasons. Built upon a shared commitment to the idea that freedom is a sacred privilege that must be protected vigilantly, Norway has stood closely by the United States in many conflicts since its independence in 1905. Norway was one of the first nations to stand with us in Afghanistan following the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, and continues to contribute troops to NATO's Resolute Support Mission alongside us today. Nearer to my Navy roots, the Norwegians have deployed naval assets to support anti-piracy efforts in Operation Ocean Shield off Somalia in alignment with their belief as a maritime nation of the importance of open sea-lanes of communication. And today Norway is one of our strongest Allies in NATO, fully committed to supporting this important strategic alliance in both manpower and materiel.

As a founding NATO Ally, Norway is the key guardian of the Northern Flank of this important alliance, standing watch over a vast arctic frontier. Norwegians have demonstrated time and again their commitment to ensuring that regional aggressor nations do not threaten our or our Allies' interests. As a young Naval Officer during bilateral carrier battle group operations in the fjords and later as a senior officer operating on the Baltic Sea in joint fleet exercises, I personally

witnessed the Norwegian Military's incredibly impressive offensive and defensive capabilities at sea and ashore. They are without a doubt a highly valued and greatly trusted Ally!

Norway also shares our faith in a strong market-based economy. Norwegians have established one of the most secure markets in the world and earlier this year their national sovereign wealth fund reached an unprecedented achievement by surpassing one trillion dollars. This stability affords them the opportunity to look towards new and innovative technologies and other investments, seeking partner nations with which to pursue greater economic strength. Looking to the future, should you confirm my nomination, I would seek to pursue three principal objectives for the United States in our partnership with Norway.

First and foremost, I would seek to reaffirm that our commitment to NATO remains as strong as ever. The President and Secretary Tillerson, along with Secretary Mattis, have stated repeatedly that we stand behind Article 5 and fully recognize the importance of a strong and adequately funded North Atlantic Treaty Organization. I would personally deliver that message through routine engagement with the Norwegian government and public.

Secondly, I would seek to strengthen even further our investment and trade ties. I would work with U.S. businesses to seek opportunities to expand into growing Norwegian markets by exploring ways for Norwegian businesses to work in collaboration with U.S. companies in markets here and abroad. I believe Norway is in an unprecedented period in its history of market expansion, and I am confident the United States could further assist and benefit from such a relationship.

Finally, I would do everything in my power to work closely with the Norwegian government and its respective security agencies to ensure the safety and security of Americans abroad, whether engaged in business, academic exchange, research collaboration, or the pleasure of traveling to such a wonderful country as Norway. All free peoples are at risk of terrorist attacks today across the globe. Therefore, I would work diligently to ensure our security agencies are working closely with Norwegian security agencies to extend an umbrella of safety over our respective nations.

As I close, I am reminded of something my father said to me as a young boy. My dad, Private First Class Kenneth J. Braithwaite, Sr., was severely wounded, shot in the head in France shortly after landing in the very first wave upon the beaches of Normandy on June 6<sup>th</sup> 1944. He loved our country and all it stood for and was the first person along with my mother Sylvia to instill in me a sense of pride in our nation and a sense of duty and service above self. I asked him once how he did it --how he exited that landing craft that morning with enemy bullets hitting all around him. He said simply, "It was my duty son." My father, although humble to a fault, was proud to have served to ensure our American dream could persevere. He told me as a young boy that anything was possible in America if you applied yourself and worked hard to realize that dream. He and my mother were very proud when I went off to the U.S. Naval Academy, both having never had the opportunity to attend college, nor being able to really afford to send me. I can't help but reflect upon my father's life, that his sacrifice in duty to our nation is today realized, his son, here before you, nominated to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Norway. In America, the Home of the Free and the Land of the Brave, anything is possible.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member Menendez, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for your time. I would be honored to learn from your comments and to answer any questions you may have.