

Statement by
Ambassador James F. Jeffrey
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 20, 2010

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. I want to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to give you my views on U.S. – Iraq relations and the priorities that will guide me if I am confirmed as United States Ambassador to Iraq. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and answering your questions in the course of this session.

President Obama and Secretary Clinton have bestowed a great honor on me by nominating me to serve as Ambassador to Iraq. I am humbled by their selection and, if confirmed, my service there will be the culmination of a 43-year career in the service of our country, often on difficult assignments. I would like to thank, first, my beloved wife, Gudrun, who cannot be here with me today as she is closing out our residence in Ankara, but who has volunteered to work in Iraq beside me. Second, my son Jahn and daughter Julia are here with me today. Third, I would like to thank my parents, who have passed away, Herbert and Helen Jeffrey, for making it possible in so many ways for me to be here today. I am the middle of three generations of Jeffreys who have served our country in places like Guadalcanal, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, or have supported their husbands,

sons, and fathers with so much love and dedication while on such assignments. I also want to thank my colleagues, Chris Hill and Ryan Crocker, and their predecessors John Negroponte and Zal Khalilzad, whose dedication and leadership prepared the way for the successes we are now seeing in Iraq.

If confirmed, I will be returning to a country that differs significantly from the one I left in 2005. Although extremists retain the capability to mount high profile attacks, there have been tremendous improvements in security nationwide. In fact, June witnessed the lowest level of violence since the start of military operations in March 2003. Economic activity is picking up speed. The medium-term economic outlook is favorable in large part because oil production and revenues are projected to increase in the coming years. Iraq still faces long-term difficulties in achieving the sustainable growth that will translate into higher incomes and more jobs and in reining in budget deficits. Iraq has successfully completed its second round of national elections since my departure in 2005, evidence of the commitment to a democratic process that is taking hold despite political and sectarian differences that continue to have an impact in Iraq.

Iraq is experiencing a period of rapid change. U.S. policy must evolve to reflect and adapt to the changes, as President Obama laid out in his Camp Lejeune speech in February 2009. The President's strategy provides a mission statement that guides the entire U.S. civilian and military effort to achieve goals shared by

the Iraqi and American peoples: an Iraq that is sovereign, stable, and self reliant with a government that is just, representative, and accountable. If confirmed, one of my main goals will be to build on the gains we have made in partnership with the Iraqi people after years of shared sacrifices. If confirmed, I will also direct the transition now underway as the U.S. combat mission in Iraq ends next month and the U.S. role shifts further to emphasize building normal civilian ties between our countries. If confirmed, I will reinforce in words and deeds that the withdrawal of U.S. combat forces in no way signals a lessening of our commitment to Iraq. As Vice President Biden said to Iraqi guests at our embassy's July 4 reception, "The American people stand united with you at a time when a new Iraq has been born."

The military-to-civilian transition now well underway is so profound that it is accurate to say that we are forging a new relationship with the new Iraq. The Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA), concluded between our countries in November 2008, lays out an extensive blueprint of political, economic, social, cultural and educational partnerships designed to help achieve our shared goals in Iraq. The SFA will be particularly valuable as a tool for coordinating the activities of the State Department with other U.S. government civilian agencies active in Iraq, especially USAID and the Treasury, Justice, and Agriculture departments. We all have significant roles to play.

There will be ongoing military cooperation as our relationship with Iraq evolves. For the time being, Iraqi security forces still require certain assistance with logistics and meeting some other operational requirements. While the remaining U.S. forces will continue to provide training and mentoring until their departure by the end of 2011, the hard work of maintaining security and stability is an Iraqi responsibility, and Iraqi forces are showing they are increasingly able to meet that responsibility.

The timetable for withdrawal of U.S. forces laid out by President Obama at Camp Lejeune in February 2009 remains in effect. By August 31 of this year, U.S. combat brigades will complete their withdrawal and the 50,000 remaining troops will focus on training, advising, and equipping the Iraqi security forces (ISF), protecting U.S. military and civilian personnel and facilities, assisting and conducting targeted counter-terrorism operations in coordination with the ISF, and supporting civilian agencies and international organizations in their capacity-building efforts. Further drawdowns in U.S. forces will occur in accordance with our bilateral Security Agreement with Iraq in which we have mutually agreed that all U.S. forces will exit Iraq by December 31, 2011. Our implementation of these agreements stands as an example of the United States' upholding President Obama's commitment to building international relationships guided by principles of mutual respect, mutual interests, and mutual responsibility.

The President's principles guide the approach of all our various agencies, and, if confirmed, one of my core responsibilities will be maintaining a close working relationship with U.S. military leaders in Iraq. This was a priority for previous Ambassadors in Baghdad, and it will be for me as well, if I am confirmed. The success of our efforts in Iraq depends on maintaining this strong civilian – military partnership. There has been unity in planning and implementing the transition, and that will continue. The military-to-civilian transition is possible in large part because of the great work done by our armed forces both in countering the violence directed against the people of Iraq by extremists and in building up the capabilities of the Iraqi security forces so that they can defend their country. I intend to follow the U.S. military successes in Iraq with the successful transition to a robust civilian relationship that strengthens the partnership between the United States and Iraq for the long-term.

We now look to Iraq's leaders to take the steps that will complement the gains made in security. At the top of that list, in my view, is government formation. It has now been more than four months since the people of Iraq voted in national elections, and still no successor government is in place. This is an Iraqi matter, and I want to emphasize that the United States is not taking sides in the negotiations underway among the various parties. We are, however, stressing to political leaders that they must get on with the job. That means they must make

compromises even if that requires giving up personal ambitions or partisan agendas. This process must result in the formation of a truly representative government that enjoys broad acceptance and meets the needs and aspirations of all Iraqis.

While it is unsettling to see this government formation process drag on, it is an encouraging sign that Iraq's political leaders are engaged in earnest discussions. The Iraqi people want movement on the major problems that still bedevil them in their daily lives, like electricity and water shortages, lack of employment opportunities, and corruption. There is a need for decisive government action across a broad range of national problems. But the Iraq of 2010 is not the Iraq of 2006, the last time we had a prolonged government formation process. Unlike in 2006, the dangerous power vacuum and violent instability that some predicted have not developed. The caretaker government continues to provide basic services and salaries, and the security forces continue to maintain stability on the streets. Iraq is better off than when I left it in 2005 and the elements necessary for Iraq's success are present.

If confirmed to lead the U.S. mission, I will work with my staff and colleagues across the U.S. government, and with the Iraqi government and people to help Iraq fulfill its potential. The partnership laid out in the Strategic Framework Agreement provides both our countries a shared way forward. We will

work together to advance economic reform and create a legislative and regulatory environment that will stimulate foreign investment and expansion of Iraq's nascent private sector. In this regard, the passage of a hydrocarbons law remains a priority. Iraq is blessed with tremendous natural resources, but improvements to the business climate will encourage greater interest among U.S. companies that have been reluctant to engage in Iraq. Many Iraqi students and scholars are eager to pursue their studies in the United States. The large and well established academic programs already underway, such as the Fulbright program, are benefiting from increased Iraqi contributions and fully funded scholarship initiatives launched by the Iraqi government. We are actively working with Iraqi cultural heritage specialists to help them develop their abilities to preserve Iraq's marvelous antiquities. There is a great deal of work remaining in the development of professional judicial and criminal justice institutions to complement intensive training of the police force. The agriculture, energy, and technology sectors are ripe for further cooperative efforts, as are promotion of civil society and institutions of governance. These are only a few examples of a wide range of activities envisioned under the SFA that will contribute to Iraq's development as a democratic and prosperous member of the international community.

There is also great potential on the diplomatic front. For more than 50 years, Iraq has been a source of instability in the region. If Iraqis are able to secure their

fragile democracy and build accountable, transparent, and capable institutions, their country can become an economic and cultural engine that helps to stabilize the region. Given its strategic geography, diverse society, and abundant natural resources, a stable Iraq can become a regional hub for trade and investment, and a center for educational and cultural exchanges. For years, this regional engagement has been a high-priority objective for the United States.

Our policy goals in Iraq remain ambitious and of long-term strategic importance to our own country. We must be sure that the resources available to the U.S. mission are adequate for the work that lies ahead. This will be an ongoing subject of discussion with the Congress. We have paid particular attention to the impact of the drawdown of U.S. forces on programs under military control that will shift to civilian responsibility. We have worked closely with the U.S. military for months to ensure that we have identified all essential tasks that should transition to civilian agencies under Chief of Mission authority. The financial and personnel requirements for some programs will be substantial. For example, the State Department will take over responsibility for police training from the Department of Defense on October 1, 2011, after which the State Department, with appropriate contributions from the Government of Iraq, will direct and fund police development providing senior level advising and mentoring and specialized skills training.

In line with our determination to build up the civilian side of our relationship with Iraq, we intend to support a robust diplomatic presence nationwide. Our presence will have a significant budget profile because of security and life support expenses. None of this is news to the Congress, but it is perhaps worth repeating that our work in Iraq is unfinished, and, indeed, will require a major commitment of resources from the United States for the perhaps five years as we help Iraq establish itself as a fully sovereign, stable and self-reliant state.

I should also note that the United States is not alone in assisting Iraq. The United Nations and its office in Iraq, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), have played an invaluable role in helping Iraqis address difficult political issues and in carrying out a series of elections widely recognized as fair and transparent. A number of countries and the EU have assistance programs addressing specific needs in Iraq. There has been considerable international assistance, in particular from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, on refugee issues. Iraq recognizes the value of these international connections and is seeking to strengthen ties with the European Union and membership in the World Trade Organization.

I would like to note other challenges that will require the attention of the new U.S. ambassador in Baghdad. Unfortunately, some of these have lingered for years, and, no doubt, are well known to many of you.

Arab-Kurd tensions still fester. The GOI and the Kurdistan Regional Government are locked in a dispute over internal boundaries demarcating Iraqi Kurdistan territory, most notably the status of the city of Kirkuk. We are supporting UNAMI's efforts to bring together Kurdish and Arab representatives for negotiations on these issues. At the same time, we are urging Kurdish leaders to moderate their rhetoric on disputed internal boundaries during the government formation period – we want the Kurds actively involved in forming an inclusive government, not hindering future efforts to reach a resolution of difficult issues connected with boundaries. We are urging the Kurdish leaders to work cooperatively through the Combined Security Mechanism (an agreement among Iraqi security forces, USF-I, and the Peshmerga) to jointly monitor checkpoints and coordinate patrols.

Iraq's neighbors seek opportunities to influence internal Iraqi political and security developments. These countries may have an understandable stake in the choices Iraq makes that affect relations with its neighbors, but this does not justify interference in Iraq's internal political life or actions that threaten Iraq's internal stability. Iraq's national elections in March and the ensuing extended period of government formation have spurred its neighbors to take an increasingly active interest in the direction of Iraq's internal political developments.

Iran's intentions are a major concern, although there is clear evidence of resistance in Iraq to pressure from Iran. Our assessment is that Iran seeks a Shi'a-led government in Baghdad that is stable but under Iran's political, economic, and military influence. Iran attempts to exert its influence through financial and political backing for political parties, high-level engagement with Iraqi leaders, and support for Shi'a militant groups. Iran has also relied on increasing trade and investment to secure its interests in Iraq. But, we should recognize that Iran's efforts continue to run into the natural independence of Iraqis. For example, Iran failed to block the signing of the U.S. – Iraq Security and Strategic Framework Agreements. We also see the success of initiatives we have taken with Iraq to reintegrate Iraq in the region and the international community. Iraq's solid relations with Jordan and Egypt, its effective cooperation with Turkey on counterterrorism, and its improving connections with EU countries are indicators of the Iraqi government's desire to diversify its regional and international ties. If confirmed, I will encourage the Iraqi government to maintain this positive course.

Improving conditions for Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons remains a high-priority concern to us and to the international community. The Government of Iraq has made progress on assisting displaced Iraqis, but we are urging them to do much more. We are working with the international community to provide assistance, protection, and durable solutions for displaced Iraqis. The

long-term strategy is to help the Iraqi government create the stability that will allow the reintegration of Iraqis who choose to return to their homes and sustain humanitarian assistance for displaced Iraqis who have yet to return. The U.S. focus is on education, health care, food assistance, and cash assistance for the most vulnerable, via contributions to the UN, other international organizations, and NGOs. Inside Iraq, our funds are also used to support communities of returnees through the rehabilitation of homes and rehabilitation or creation of water and sanitation facilities. In FY 2009, the U.S. government contributed \$387 million in humanitarian assistance for Iraqi refugees, conflict victims, and internally displaced persons.

The Iraqi government is taking helpful steps to assist displaced persons on its own. Over the last year, the government increased the budget for the Ministry of Displacement and Migration five-fold and increased grants to individual returnees. There are plans to invest in agricultural and other infrastructure programs and basic services in areas with large numbers of returnees, along with creation of employment programs. These measures are helping ease conditions for returnees, but we believe Iraq can do much more, especially through increased assistance to its citizens who are displaced in neighboring countries.

Sanctions imposed on Iraq after the August 1990 invasion of Kuwait constitute another set of complex issues and impede Iraq's efforts to normalize its

relations with the international community. Following the invasion, the UN Security Council passed a series of resolutions that imposed ongoing obligations on Iraq under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. In our bilateral Security Agreement, the United States made a commitment to Iraq to use its “best efforts” to help Iraq return to the legal and international standing it held prior to August 1990. This has been a priority in our discussions with the Iraqi government in meetings of the Diplomatic Joint Coordination Committee, one of the mechanisms set up under the umbrella of the Strategic Framework Agreement. In the course of those discussions, we are helping the Iraqis identify the steps necessary to remove UN Chapter VII restrictions.

We remain deeply concerned about the fate of Iraq’s minority communities. Each religious and ethnic group has experienced devastating violence. These groups remain vulnerable despite improvements in the overall security environment. This will be an urgent area for my attention if I am confirmed. Our policy now is to work with the Iraqi government to address the problems faced by these communities, and to hear directly from the community members about their political, economic, and security concerns. Department of State and USAID assistance programs have focused on two areas: immediate humanitarian needs and promotion of long-lasting self-sustaining projects. We also have a significant role to play in ensuring that the highest levels of the Government of Iraq are

responsive to minority concerns, especially in directing security forces to act to protect these groups.

Finally, if confirmed as ambassador, I pledge my utmost efforts to work with our embassy's key partners, with the U.S. military, and with the heroic Iraqi people. My first order of business within the embassy would be to stress to all for whom I am responsible the priority of security in a still-dangerous environment, and the need for the highest standards of professional conduct, including the safeguarding of our resources and U.S. government funding.

Mr. Chairman, I have tried to touch on a number of the major issues that, in my view, would be on my agenda if confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Iraq. I believe that we can now describe the current situation in Iraq and prospects for successful resolution of Iraq's problems in more optimistic terms than the "fragile" and "reversible" characterizations used in previous years. Thanks to the dedication and hard work of the U.S. military and civilian team since 2003, in concert with our Iraqi partners, we can point to solid accomplishments, even as difficult work ahead remains. Our country owes all Americans who have served in Iraq recognition for their sacrifices and appreciation for their achievements. The Iraqi people deserve great credit for their perseverance in the face of hardship and danger as they struggle to build the future they deserve. I hope to lead the U.S. mission in Baghdad and to join with the Iraqis as they realize that future.

As a veteran myself, I am acutely aware of the sacrifices of the men and women in our armed forces who have suffered grievous wounds and the now more than 4,400 who have lost their lives, along with many Chief of Mission personnel, in the course of the conflict in Iraq. Our nation owes these men and women a debt of gratitude. The financial burden on the American people has been immense. The Iraqi people have also paid a heavy price. Nevertheless, we can now point to real progress – progress that must be sustained and built upon through continued focus and dedication.