

**Statement by Stuart Jones
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Iraq
Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
June 11, 2014**

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, Members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee,

I am deeply honored to appear before you today, as President Obama's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq. I am grateful to the President and to Secretary Kerry for their confidence in me. If confirmed, I will work closely with you to advance U.S. goals in Iraq. I look forward to building on the excellent work of my predecessor and friend, Ambassador Steve Beecroft, who is of course, here today.

With your permission, Mr. Chairman, I would like to introduce my daughter, Dorothy Jones, a rising sophomore at Duke University. She flew up from Atlanta to be with me today. My wife, Barbara, a former Foreign Service officer and current civil servant, is in Amman with our sons, Thaddeus and Woody so they could not join us. I am grateful for our children's support for this assignment and throughout our Foreign Service careers.

Mr. Chairman, I am both humbled and thrilled to have the opportunity to serve as Chief of Mission at American Embassy Baghdad, one of our largest and most complex diplomatic missions. I had the honor of serving as Deputy Chief of Mission in Baghdad. I also served as the Governorate Coordinator in Ramadi, in Anbar Province under the Coalition Provisional Authority in 2004. Later I was Director for Iraq Affairs on the National Security Council staff here in Washington. These jobs have helped me prepare for the complexity and challenges of the assignment ahead.

We are all familiar with the history of Iraq's past decade. It is impossible to serve in Iraq without recalling and honoring the sacrifice and achievement of our U.S. servicemen and women and civilians. More than 4,000 Americans lost their lives to give the Iraqi people a chance at a better future. Today we are committed to helping build a new Iraq, which has moved beyond the isolation and oppression of its past, with secure borders, strong democratic institutions, and where all citizens benefit from its abundant resources.

On April 30, Iraq held its first national elections since the departure of U.S. forces. As they did in 2005 and 2010, Iraq's citizens overcame terrorist threats and exercised their franchise.

Today, Iraq is also producing around 3.2 million barrels of oil per day. It is one of the major contributors to the world oil market and this oil wealth has placed Iraq on the path to economic self-sufficiency. Iraqi oil exports have also made it possible to sustain the international sanctions on Iran without cost to the world economy.

While we are encouraged by these developments, we also recognize that the Republic of Iraq is now engaged in a fierce fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL. The complex, coordinated attack on Mosul on Monday, in which ISIL militants overran parts of the city, highlights just how dangerous this group is. ISIL now controls much of Iraq's second-largest city, and thousands of people have been forced to flee in the last several days, according to the UN. The Iraqi Security Forces are responding together with Kurdish Peshmerga forces. We will continue to monitor the situation closely, and will work with our international partners to try to meet the needs of those who have been displaced.

Overall, violence in Iraq has reached levels not seen since height of U.S. surge in 2007. Suicide vest and vehicle bomb attacks are averaging nearly 70 per month since the beginning of this year. Most of these were carried out by foreign fighters, who use Syria as a safe haven to conduct attacks in Iraq. The UN has reported that in May 2014 alone, 799 Iraqi civilians were killed by acts of terrorism.

ISIL overtook the cities of Fallujah and Ramadi on January 1 of this year. Iraqi security forces cooperated successfully with Sunni tribal groups to largely push them out of Ramadi. But ISIL still occupies Fallujah and poses a threat to the Iraqi state and its neighbors.

The United States has taken important steps to help Iraq combat this shared enemy. We have provided urgently needed military equipment through the Foreign Military Sales process. I would like to thank the members of this committee for their leadership, and the Congress for making these transfers possible. In addition to military equipment transfers, we have strengthened our information-sharing relationships, and are developing programs to improve border security. We have also initiated a high-level dialogue between our senior military leadership and key Iraqi military commanders, coupled with training for Iraqi Security Forces.

Security assistance, however, is only one element of our assistance, and it is connected to intense political and economic engagement. Accordingly, the U.S.

has also encouraged Iraq to adopt a holistic strategy to isolate ISIL from the population and develop a strategy for sustainable security. This includes incorporating tribal fighters from Anbar, Ninewa, and Salah ah Din into their security framework to protect the populations in their towns and villages. This strategy, which was employed successfully during the U.S. military surge in 2007, will also require continued engagement between Iraq's political leaders and Sunni tribal leaders to effectively defeat ISIL. We are also encouraging Iraqi political and security leaders to ensure that their difficult fight against ISIL is conducted in a manner that protects the civilian population and adheres to the rule of law.

I already mentioned Iraq's successful elections. Turnout nationally was just over 60 percent. It is notable that turnout in Anbar province, where ISIL is most active, was 45 percent. Iraq's Security Forces protected more than 50,000 polling stations on April 30, and with support the U.N. Assistance Mission in Iraq, Iraq's Independent High Election Commission worked to provide Iraq's 21 million eligible voters the ability to vote. While Prime Minister Maliki's State of Law coalition won more seats than any other, it fell short of parliamentary majority that is required under the Iraqi constitution to form a government.

We will encourage all sides to work together to swiftly form a new government that is representative of all Iraqis. This is an Iraqi-owned process, and it will be up to Iraq's political leaders to form a government that reflects the will of the people as expressed in the April 30th election. We hope they will pay special attention to the rights and interests of the religious and ethnic minority populations, including the sizeable Christian community. Our mission in Iraq has worked hard—especially as ISIL attacks have escalated in the last year—to urge the Government of Iraq to protect these vulnerable groups. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing our commitment to ensuring that these communities are afforded the right protection.

Despite Iraq's political and security challenges, its tremendous economic growth over the last decade has been impressive. Iraq's economy has averaged around 6.5 percent growth since 2005. This has been primarily driven by the energy sector. Iraq is now producing around 3.2 million barrels of oil per day; it is the second-largest producer within OPEC. The International Energy Agency estimates that Iraq will provide 45 percent of all new incremental oil supply worldwide between now and 2035. Iraqi oil will be essential to meet rising international demand and maintain market stability. While the United States imports less than 5 percent of its oil from Iraq, global economic growth will benefit from Iraqi oil reaching the

market. Increasing exports from Iraq is therefore one of our highest bilateral strategic priorities.

Lack of onshore pumping and storage capacity continues to prevent Iraqi production and exports from reaching their full potential. There is also tremendous opportunity to harness Iraq's significant natural gas resources. If this gas is converted to power, this would provide much-needed electricity to the Iraqi people, fueling further economic growth. In addition to partnering to share best practices on fossil fuel production and exports, we are engaged with the Government of Iraq on capturing gas for power generation, and on political issues related to hydrocarbon revenue management. The government also faces a challenge in equitably distributing the wealth created by its natural resources to its population and to use its oil wealth to promote growth in other sectors. These are all areas where the United States would be willing to help play a positive role and exchange lessons learned.

Iraq's economic growth offers exciting opportunities for U.S. firms, particularly in key sectors such as infrastructure development, construction, healthcare, telecom, and agriculture. Iraq imports some of the best equipment and technology in the world from the United States, including civilian aircraft and the turbines that generate much-needed electricity. I have spent much of my career promoting U.S. economic engagement overseas. If confirmed, I look forward to promoting Secretary Kerry's Shared Prosperity agenda as Ambassador to Iraq.

Mr. Chairman, as I have discussed, Iraq is a challenging security environment. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will bear responsibility for the safety of all U.S. personnel in Iraq, including at Embassy Baghdad and at our consulates in Erbil and Basrah. If confirmed, I will work closely with our security team on the ground – as well as with our Diplomatic Security colleagues back here in Washington – to ensure that our people are protected. I assure you this will be my highest priority, as well as to protect the safety of American citizens in Iraq.

Since U.S. troops withdrew from Iraq in 2011, the Embassy and consulates have significantly reduced our staffing. As of June 2014, we have approximately 5,300 staff; just one-third of our 2012 footprint. If confirmed, I will continue to examine staffing levels to ensure that we have the appropriate number of personnel to carry out our mission.

Again I wish to commend my colleague Steve Beecroft and his whole-of-government team for their tremendous achievements and selfless service; I am proud to be named as Steve's successor.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to address you today. I appreciate and value this Committee's oversight of our efforts in Iraq and, if confirmed, I look forward to welcoming you and your respective staff members to Baghdad. Your continued engagement on the policy issues discussed today is a vital element in ensuring our success in Iraq. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have. Thank you.