

**STATEMENT OF MATTHEW H. TUELLER  
AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE TO THE STATE OF KUWAIT  
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
JUNE 21, 2011**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

It is an honor to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as Ambassador to the State of Kuwait. I am grateful to the President for the nomination and to Secretary Clinton for her confidence in me and for her leadership of the Department of State. If confirmed by the Senate, I will do my best to live up to their trust and to work closely with this Committee, and others in Congress, to continue to advance the vital interests of the United States in Kuwait and in the region.

Mr. Chairman, the State of Kuwait has been a reliable partner and friend in a region of utmost importance to U.S. interests. Since Kuwait's 1991 liberation from Saddam Hussein's brutal occupation, U.S. military forces and our Coalition partners have relied heavily on Kuwait's support for our policy priorities in Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan, and in countering terrorist threats. If confirmed, I will work to expand that support into broader political, social, and economic arenas to build and sustain a partnership that will advance key American interests in a region that today is undergoing rapid and profound change.

If confirmed, I will seek to focus intensively on ensuring that Kuwait continues to act as a full partner with the U.S. in regional security efforts. Sustaining and further strengthening our security partnership will be important to meeting our shared broader regional strategic objectives. Kuwait is playing an essential role in the repositioning of our forces from Iraq. Continuing to foster improved Kuwaiti-Iraqi relations in coordination with Embassy Baghdad will help speed Iraq's regional re-integration and create an atmosphere in which political and trade ties can prosper.

We share with the Government of Kuwait a common interest in combating the spread of extremist ideology and rooting out terrorist elements that threaten peace and security in the region. If confirmed, I will seek to build strong counter-terrorism cooperation to include increased information sharing and intensified training efforts to ensure the best possible force protection for our troops in Kuwait, as well as our Mission employees, family members, and the larger American community while continuing to build on the cooperation essential to countering terrorist threats.

As states in the region today face an unprecedented wave of popular demands to close the often yawning gaps between governments and the people, Kuwait's traditions of open political discourse and constitutional

sharing of power have put the country in a relatively advantageous position to meet the challenges of this dawning era in the Middle East. Parliamentary elections in 2009 once again gave opposition voices a significant platform from which to influence and oversee government policies. The participation of women in elections since 2005 has led to a gradually increasing role for women in parliamentary and political life. Four women were elected to seats in parliament in 2009. If confirmed, I will endeavor to help Kuwait consolidate and expand those democratic gains, to include supporting the development of grassroots women's organizations, civil society groups, youth and other activists, and advancing the rights and protections of vulnerable populations living within Kuwait's borders.

In addition to deepening our security cooperation and advancing the strength of civil society, we must seek with our Kuwaiti partners to create new opportunities for economic partnership, both within and beyond the energy sphere. Kuwait's objective to become a regional commercial center, including passing a 5-year \$104 billion development plan, will create commercial opportunities for U.S. companies and provide us the opportunity to work with the Kuwaiti government and with the private sector to promote economic reform and private sector growth, and create opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs. The potential for dynamic synergies between

Kuwait and the U.S., combining capital, technology and expertise to advance global development, is enormous. Constructive bilateral engagement on trade and investment-related issues, through tools such as the Trade and Investment Framework (TIFA), will help support needed reforms and cement our partnership. If confirmed, I will pursue ongoing policies that promote increased investment, trade and project development between our two countries.

Finally, if confirmed, I will work energetically in reaching out to Kuwaiti youth via U.S.-sponsored exchange and English language programs and through Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) programming to highlight common interests and emphasize strong bonds of friendship based on shared core values. Forty-five percent of Kuwait's population is under the age of 25, and many Kuwaiti youth have no direct experience regarding the U.S. role in the 1991 liberation of Kuwait. While heavily exposed to commercial Western media and cultural influences, the U.S. must play an active role in exposing them to the fundamentals of participatory civil society with values of tolerance and nonviolence. This will ensure stronger bilateral ties and thus counter the negative extremist influences found all too often in regional media.

Mr. Chairman, I have had the extraordinary privilege of serving my country as a Foreign Service Officer for more than 25 years, most recently as Deputy Chief of Mission at our Embassy in Cairo during the turbulent but inspiring events of the January 25<sup>th</sup> Revolution. I was in Egypt as a graduate student taking advanced Arabic classes in October 1981 when President Sadat was assassinated and President Mubarak began his 29 years of rule. My first exposure to the Middle East was as a dependent of a Foreign Service Officer when my father was assigned to study Arabic in Tangier from 1965-67 followed by his assignment as Consul in Tangier from 1967-1969. My Foreign Service career has included service in Washington as Egypt desk officer and Deputy Director of the Office of Northern Gulf Affairs. Overseas I have served in Baghdad, twice in Riyadh, in London, Doha, Amman, and Yemen. I have served twice before in Kuwait, first as Political Counselor following the re-opening of our Embassy in 1991 and then more recently in 2004-2007 as Deputy Chief of Mission. The Ambassadors under whom I served in Kuwait include Edward Gnehm, Ryan Crocker, and Richard LeBaron and, if confirmed, I would strive to live up to the examples they set as outstanding U.S. diplomats. Under their leadership, I was able to play some part in laying the foundation upon which the U.S.-

Kuwaiti relationship rests today. I believe I can make a substantial contribution of service to the American people as Ambassador to Kuwait.

If confirmed as Ambassador, I will work with persistence, enthusiasm, and stamina to protect American citizens and promote U.S. interests, while consolidating and augmenting the close ties between our governments' leaders and our peoples. Again, I am honored, Mr. Chairman, by this nomination and the opportunity to appear before you today. I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.