

**Testimony of Charles H. Rivkin**

**Ambassador-Designate to France and Monaco**

**July 7, 2009**

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman and members of the Committee. I'd also like to thank my Congressman, Henry Waxman, for his kind words.

I'm very pleased to have with me today my lifelong friend and brother, Robert Rivkin, whom I'd like to introduce to the Committee. I also want to acknowledge my wife Susan Tolson and my children Elias and Lily Rivkin. Although they are unable to attend this hearing, I wouldn't be here without their endless support.

Madam Chairwoman, it is a tremendous honor for me to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to France and Monaco. I am deeply grateful to both President Obama and Secretary Clinton for the trust they have placed in me to serve as Chief of Mission to our oldest friend and ally.

France has always shared our nation's core values and has been a tireless champion of democracy, freedom and human rights. Today, our partnership is stronger than ever, and as President Sarkozy recently observed "...never in the history of our two countries have the United States and France been so close to one another on major issues, major questions." Both our countries understand that when America is united with a strong Europe, no issue is too great for us to solve together. To underscore this resolve, President Obama made a point of visiting France twice during his first five months in office. If confirmed by the United States Senate, I intend to build on the existing, positive momentum between the United States and France and use this unique moment in time to further strengthen and deepen our already strong relationship.

If confirmed, I hope to bring an energy and fresh perspective to one of America's most important partnerships. We are at the beginning of a new and historic era in French-American relations that was recently highlighted by France's decision to rejoin NATO's integrated military command structure after a 43 year absence. Today, France stands by our side and is an indispensable ally on almost every major issue. France is fighting against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda with our troops

in Afghanistan and has provided critical financial support for counter-insurgency efforts in Pakistan. As a leader in the EU, France has worked closely with us to advance a two-state solution in the Middle East and continues to play a central role in maintaining coordinated, international pressure on Iran. France is a leading voice on climate change and a strong ally in energy and security matters. Monaco is also a good partner for our country in environmental protection, international development and other important global issues.

As a former CEO with international experience, I'm pleased to note that over \$1.3 billion in commercial transactions take place every day between the United States and France. French subsidiaries in the U.S. provide nearly 500,000 American jobs and the U.S. is the largest foreign investor in France employing over 600,000 French citizens. If confirmed, I will work with the French government to ensure continued free and open trade between our two countries.

I also hope to build on the successful efforts of my predecessors in making public diplomacy one of the top priorities for our mission to France and Monaco. I believe my history and media background have prepared me well to engage Europe's young generation of first time voters by helping to create a sense of common values and purpose with the United States. Following Secretary Clinton's vision of 21<sup>st</sup> century statecraft, I hope to engage Europe's future leaders through digital technology and 'smart power' initiatives which will open doors and create new opportunities for dialogue.

Finally, if confirmed I would hope to use the skills I've acquired as an MBA and CEO to lead the large and complex embassy operation in Paris. I have spent my career building and managing organizations and look forward to helping maximize the effectiveness of our Mission to France and Monaco.

Members of the Committee, I also want you to know that having the chance to represent our country's interests in France would be deeply personal for me. My father, William Rivkin, marched in Patton's army and was awarded the French *Chevalier-Publique* for his role in the liberation of France. He then went on to serve as Chief of Mission in French speaking countries where I lived as a young boy; Luxembourg under President Kennedy and then Senegal and The Gambia under President Johnson. Although my father died while serving his country in 1967, he instilled in me the belief that public service is not only an obligation, but the highest possible honor. I always dreamed of following in his footsteps, but never imagined that I might have the opportunity to serve in a country that I admire as much as France.

When I was a young man, I had the wonderful experience of living with a French family in Rennes while studying at the Institut Franco-Américain and had the chance to explore the countryside in Brittany, Normandy, Burgundy and Franche-Comté during my stay. I worked as a “stagiaire” for Renault in Paris and have taken countless business trips to France over the last twenty years. These experiences have given me a deep appreciation for France as well as the French people and culture.

I have always been active in public service, but I am particularly fortunate to have been connected to the U.S. State Department for most of my life through the American Foreign Service Association. My family and I have proudly presented the William R. Rivkin award at the State Department for the last 42 years, honoring mid-level Foreign Service Officers who exhibit “intellectual courage and constructive dissent” in the line of duty. I have had the chance to witness how the brilliant, hard working and often under-appreciated men and women of the U.S. Foreign Service change the world through their tireless efforts on behalf of our country. President Obama once served as a judge for this award, which was founded on the belief that dissent is the highest form of patriotism.

Madame Chairwoman and members of the Committee, if confirmed by the United States Senate, I will do everything in my power to strengthen and deepen the ties that have bound France and America together since the birth of our great country. I look forward to this extraordinary challenge and hope to have the chance to serve the United States of America at this important moment in history. Thank you, and I look forward to any questions you might have.

