

STATEMENT OF DEBORAH K. Jones  
AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE TO THE STATE OF KUWAIT  
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
FEBRUARY 6, 2008

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I welcome this opportunity to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the State of Kuwait. I am deeply honored by the confidence shown in me by President Bush and Secretary Rice in making this nomination. If confirmed by the Senate, I look forward to working 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. I am joined today by my daughter Ana, a sophomore at the Madeira School here in Virginia. My husband Rick Olson, also a Foreign Service Officer, is serving as Deputy Chief of Mission at USNATO and our 12 year old Isabella is happily serving with him there. I am so proud of them and grateful for their steadfastness and their encouragement.

Mr. Chairman, the State of Kuwait has been a reliable partner and friend in a turbulent and transitional region of utmost importance to U.S. interests; because of this, the President designated Kuwait a Major Non-NATO Ally in

2003. Since Kuwait's 1991 liberation from Saddam Hussein's brutal occupation, whose painful remnants remain visible to this day, U.S. military forces and our Coalition partners have relied on Kuwait's material and logistical support for our policy priorities in Iraq, Iran and the Global War on Terror. If confirmed, I will work to consolidate and expand that support into broader political, social and economic arenas to build and sustain a stable and democratic Iraq, at peace with its neighbors, and to maintain security throughout the region.

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 even stronger and more robust counter-terrorism cooperation to include increased information sharing, intensified training efforts and the careful evaluation of existing cooperative programs 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.

Kuwait continues to build positively on a proud, indigenous tradition of boisterous political discourse. In 2005, women were granted the right to vote; subsequently, nearly 60% of those eligible to so do participated in their June 2006 parliamentary and municipal elections. Also in 2006, the government of Kuwait respected constitutionally mandated procedures in appointing its new leader, Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al Sabah. Since then, Kuwait has witnessed further democratic advancements, including increased press freedoms and a much needed redistricting law. If confirmed, I will endeavor to help Kuwait consolidate and expand those democratic gains, consistent with the President's Freedom Agenda, to include supporting the development of fledgling, grassroots women's organizations, civil society groups 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 President Bush's Freedom Agenda, we must seek to create new paradigms of economic partnership, both within and beyond the energy sphere. The recent historic deal between DOW Chemical and the Kuwaiti government, the largest of its kind in Kuwait's history, exemplifies the

kind of creative initiatives that are possible. The potential for dynamic synergies between Kuwait and the U.S., combining capital, technology and expertise to advance global development compatible with current environmental concerns, 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 committed 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 expand U.S.-sponsored exchange and English language programs and utilize Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) funds to reach a broad spectrum of young citizens and future leaders throughout Kuwaiti society. These programs ensure stronger bilateral ties and thus counter the negative extremist influences found all too often in regional media.

Mr. Chairman, I have served my country as a Foreign Service Officer for more than 25 years, most recently as Principal Officer at our Consulate General in Istanbul, Turkey, another vital ally of the United States undergoing

dynamic transition in a volatile region. Prior to that, I served in Washington as Country Director for Arabian Peninsula Affairs in the lead up to the March 2003 engagement in Iraq. My experience with the region includes four Washington assignments directly related to the Near East and overseas postings in Baghdad, Tunis, Damascus, Riyadh (as a dependent spouse) and the United Arab Emirates. I look forward to continuing to serve the American people in 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 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.