

**Testimony of Fay Hartog-Levin  
Ambassador-Designate to the Kingdom of the Netherlands  
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations  
July 22, 2009**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee: Good Morning.

I am honored to appear before you for this confirmation hearing.

I want to express my gratitude to President Obama and Secretary Clinton for the trust and confidence they have placed in me with the nomination to be the next United States Ambassador to The Netherlands. If confirmed by the Senate, it will be my greatest honor to represent President Obama and our country in The Netherlands.

I am blessed with the love and support of a wonderful husband and I am the proud mother of two children. I would like to introduce them to you today:

The Netherlands has been a special place for me all my life. It is also special in a larger sense for its many centuries of shared history with the United States. This year merits particular mention, for it was four hundred years ago that Henry Hudson, at the helm of the Dutch Ship, Half Moon, arrived at the shores of what is now Manhattan.

My Dutch ancestry can be traced back hundreds of years – perhaps even to the time that Peter Stuyvesant established Nieuwe Amsterdam as a thriving port city and multi-cultural capital. My parents, Ada and Jo Hartog, were born to distinguished Dutch manufacturing families. They married in 1937, built a modern house in The Hague and expected to live there for the rest of their lives. But World War II intervened and their lives took a different turn. They escaped Europe in 1942 and landed in Dutch Guyana where my father served in the Dutch Army until the end of the war. They returned to Holland in 1946, but discovered that they had lost too much to remain.

As millions of immigrants have done, they started their lives anew in the United States with a deep appreciation of all the United States gave to them and to the world. We were raised with American values yet my parents maintained strong ties to their homeland.

My Dutch heritage has been a source of great pride to me. So now, to have the opportunity to serve my country as Ambassador would be, in a way, to complete my own family's history in The Hague. It would be coming full circle. To have the opportunity to do this with the backdrop of the New York 400<sup>th</sup> celebration would be yet another honor.

If confirmed, I will work to improve the image of our country in The Netherlands and also to elevate Americans' appreciation of what the Dutch have given us. The founding of New York was an enormous contribution. So, too, were the social values which the Dutch brought with them to this country and survive in both countries today: the values of freedom, democracy, creativity, entrepreneurship, diversity, and tolerance. The Netherlands was the second nation to recognize our independence, and the first country to host an American Embassy.

Last week, after receiving Dutch Prime Minister Balkenende in the Oval Office, President Obama spoke of our countries' "extraordinarily close friendship" and expressed "admiration for some of the specific international obligations that the Netherlands has taken on." Today, The Netherlands remains a partner with the United States in many troubled spots around the world, committing nearly 2,000 troops on the ground to support NATO's efforts in Afghanistan and providing ships to guard pirate-infested waters off the coast of Africa.

Since December 2001, the Dutch have been a crucial ally in Afghanistan. They currently play a key role in the south, where a Dutch General commands all of the NATO troops in the region, including thousands of American troops. The Netherlands has taken the lead in the volatile province of Uruzgan, where it leads a Provincial Reconstruction Team, trains the Afghan Army and Police, and conducts combat operations. The Dutch "3-D" approach – defense, development, diplomacy – which they have implemented so effectively, coincides closely with our strategy in the region.

Off the Horn of Africa, the Dutch have committed naval assets to counter-piracy missions. In August 2009, they will take command of Operation Atalanta, the European Union counter-piracy task force off the coast of Somalia, and deploy the command frigate MS Evertson. The Netherlands is using the rule of law to battle piracy in those troubled waters and currently holds five pirates who will be brought to trial in Dutch courts. The Dutch are engaged in efforts to provide stability and promote development in the region to eliminate the root of the problem. Most recently, they contributed financial support for the African Union Somalia Mission, which is attempting to improve security in this fragile region. The Dutch also contribute troops for KFOR in Kosovo and are important contributors at the OSCE, with a major focus on pursuing justice for war criminals.

The Dutch share our commitment to uphold freedom and alleviate poverty around the world. The Netherlands was one of the non-member countries invited to participate in the recent G-8 Summit's global food security initiative, and it has also been an active participant in recent meetings of the G-20. Nearly two-thirds of the generous Dutch foreign assistance budget (\$7 billion for 2009 or 0.8% of Dutch GDP) goes to support development in Africa, focusing on security sector reform, good governance, reproductive health, education, combating HIV/AIDS, economic growth through private sector development, and sustainable management of natural resources.

If confirmed, I will strive to further enhance our military and development cooperation.

The Dutch also share our desire for a more open global economy. Our close trade and investment ties to The Netherlands are a boon to the U.S. economy. The Netherlands is the fourth largest direct investor in the United States and the seventh largest destination for U.S. exports. The Port of Rotterdam (Europe's largest) and Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport (Europe's fourth busiest) serve as principal gateways for U.S. goods into European Union markets. If given the opportunity, I hope to expand our economic ties with The Netherlands and I plan to advocate for U.S. business interests wherever I can.

In her recent speech to the Council of Foreign Relations, Secretary Clinton said we want to "reach out beyond governments, because we believe

partnerships with people play a critical role in our 21<sup>st</sup> century statecraft.” Should I be confirmed, I and our Embassy in The Hague will employ the full range of public diplomacy programs to advance U.S. interests and strengthen the ties that exist between the peoples of our two countries. As are many developed nations, the Netherlands has experienced a significant increase in immigration from the developing world. I will be especially interested in sharing the American experience with diversity and assimilation, reaching out to a broad range of audiences, including youth and minorities, through traditional exchange programs and I will encourage innovative ways to connect with audiences throughout the country.

I share President Obama’s stated gratitude “to the Dutch people for their extraordinary contributions to international peace and security” and I am, in turn, grateful to him for nominating me to represent the United States as his Ambassador to The Netherlands.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. With your consent, I pledge to serve our country and cultivate our strong and valued relationship with the Kingdom of the Netherlands and I look forward to this wonderful opportunity to celebrate and build upon our two countries’ 400 years of shared history.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

