

Mr. Gerald M. Feierstein
Ambassador-Designate to the Republic of Yemen
U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
July 19, 2010

Chairman Kerry, Ranking Member Lugar, and Members of the Committee:

I am deeply honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Yemen, and I am grateful for the trust and confidence that President Obama and Secretary Clinton have placed in me. If confirmed by the Senate, I can assure you that I will work to advance critical U.S. foreign policy and national security interests in Yemen. Promoting security, stability, and development in Yemen and countering the threat posed by extremists groups such as al-Qaeda will be my highest priorities.

With your permission, I would like first to introduce my family: my wife of thirty-two years, Mary, and my three children: my son Adam, a United States Marine Corps veteran who served two combat tours in Iraq, and my two daughters, Annie, our family artist, and Sara, who is about to start her sophomore year in college. I am grateful to them for their enduring support and understanding throughout my career, but especially in recent years when duty assignments in Beirut and Islamabad have taken me far from them.

Although Yemen is not well-known to many Americans, it occupies an honored and venerable position in the history of the Middle East and of the world. Known by the Romans as *Arabia Felix*, or Happy Arabia, Yemen is an ancient civilization that served as a crossroads of global trade and commerce with achievements in science and technology, culture, and learning that were world-renowned for more than a millennium before Christopher Columbus first set sail for the New World. Yet, at the same time, it is a very young country, finally unified a scant two decades ago. Its passage into modernity has not been an easy one. Tensions between the former North and South Yemen erupted in a brief civil war sixteen years ago, and while that conflict was resolved in favor of unity, those tensions persist to this day.

Yemen faces many challenges and threats, the chief of which is terrorism, a global threat that requires a global response. Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, extensive international cooperation has weakened the ability of terrorists to recruit, train, fund and execute attacks. The United States is committed to further enhancing international cooperation, by strengthening old partnerships and

building new ones with governments, multilateral organizations and the private sector. We also recognize the crucial role of civil society in building a new future for Yemen and are working hard to help strengthen Yemeni civil society's capacity and resiliency.

The United States is working with Yemeni security forces to help build capable, professional institutions that can secure Yemen's territory and protect its people. At the same time, we understand that security operations are only one part of an overall effort to secure Yemen: they put pressure on extremist networks, weaken the enemy's leadership, and deny adversaries the time and space needed to organize, plan, and train for operations. Over the long term, however, the antidote for extremism will need more than security operations; it will rely on the development of credible and transparent national institutions that can deliver the political, economic, and social progress that people seek. The United States plays a critical role in helping Yemen achieve that long term objective, best evidenced by our necessary and increasingly robust development and humanitarian assistance programs designed to stabilize the country and build up Yemen's governing institutions.

Of course, the United States cannot and should not be Yemen's sole international partner in achieving these goals. The entire international community has a strong interest in seeing Yemen achieve its goals and defeat extremist threats. For that reason, the Friends of Yemen have been organized to coordinate the efforts of the international donor community in cooperation with the Government of Yemen. With participation from the states of the Arabian Peninsula, more broadly in the Middle East, Europe, and North America, the Friends of Yemen are advocating and promoting reform efforts that are essential to Yemen's success.

With a rapidly growing population and scarce natural resources, the Government of Yemen has been unable to provide critical services, adequately develop infrastructure, or give citizens a sufficient reason for optimism about their own future or the future of their children. Some 35% of Yemenis lack meaningful employment. The challenges are likely to grow more urgent as oil exports, which have fuelled economic growth and provided most government revenues for more than a decade, rapidly decline. Effective steps must be taken to help the government address the social, economic, and political challenges that confront the country.

The success or failure of efforts to address these myriad problems will directly affect the interests of the United States. As we have seen elsewhere – in

Afghanistan and in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan – the inability of governments to meet the legitimate needs of their people and the loss of faith in traditional social and political institutions has the capacity to create a vacuum readily filled by extremist groups practiced at exploiting hopelessness to achieve their own malevolent ends. In Yemen, the rise of the self-styled al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, or AQAP, presents a direct threat to the security and well-being of the people of Yemen, the broader Arabian Peninsula, and to the United States, its friends, and allies. It is incumbent upon the United States to maintain sound working relations with the Government of Yemen, civil society, and political and business leaders to build the foundations of a strong, secure, and democratic Yemen that is economically viable, politically stable, and at peace with itself and with its neighbors.

In his Inaugural Address and his speeches in Ankara, Cairo, and around the world, President Obama has laid out a policy guided by principles of mutual respect, mutual interest, and mutual responsibility; universal values; and a commitment to a broader engagement with citizens as well as with governments. Our focus on working in partnership with the people and government of Yemen, not just on security, but also on governance and development at the local and national level is reflective of that overall approach.

Over my thirty-five year career in the Foreign Service, I have been fortunate to have served in the endlessly fascinating arc of the world that stretches from Tunisia to Pakistan. I have seen at first hand both the enormous potential and the profound challenges that confront the peoples of that region as they struggle to build a positive future for themselves and their children. I have seen, too, the ravaged societies that emerge when despair leads to extremism, violence, and terror. In my most recent assignments, both in the Office of the Coordinator for Counter-terrorism and in Islamabad, I have been privileged to work on the policies and programs that shape the U.S. response to these challenges. If confirmed by the Senate, I look forward to working with our friends and partners in Yemen and building there a strong, prosperous, and participatory society that rejects extremism and looks with confidence to the future.

Thank you and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.