

BUSINESS MEETING

Tuesday, September 13, 2011

U.S. SENATE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
WASHINGTON, D.C.

1 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:17 p.m. in Room S-116, The
2 Capitol, Hon. John Kerry, chairman of the committee, presiding.

3 Present: Senators Kerry [presiding], Boxer, Menendez, Cardin, Shaheen,
4 Coons, Durbin, Udall, Lugar, Corker, Risch, and Isakson.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN KERRY, U.S. SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS

5 **THE CHAIRMAN.** We'll come to order, and I want to thank everybody. I
6 know it's busy and, as I promised you, this can go very, very quickly, hopefully.
7 There are five nominations on the agenda: Wendy Sherman to be the Under
8 Secretary of State for Political Affairs; and then the nominees to serve as
9 ambassadors to Turkey, Syria, the Czech Republic, and Armenia. I think all of the
10 nominees are well known to the committee.

11 I have personally tried to accelerate the effort to get Wendy Sherman in place
12 because this is a very important week coming up in New York. The Palestinian-

1 Israel issue is front on the burner. The Secretary and the White House are very
2 anxious to have their full team there in order to be able to lift.

3 She was nominated on July 5th, I want to just say to everybody, but her
4 confirmation hearing was originally scheduled for early August. And we
5 postponed that, frankly, in deference to the fact that a number of Senators had left
6 for the recess after the final debt ceiling vote. So, as a result we knowingly
7 undertook a whole month there, effectively, 5 weeks really, of delay, and I had to
8 explain that to Secretary Clinton and company.

9 They did some high-level shuffling of people to cover the vacancy during the
10 August recess, including temporarily calling Ambassador Tom Shannon back from
11 Brazil to take on those responsibilities. So the sooner we get this done, the sooner
12 we get Wendy Sherman back and we get her on, we get Tom Shannon back to
13 Brazil, which is important.

14 So, I also want to just express personally that I hope Robert Ford has earned
15 everybody's respect and support here. The events in Syria are horrendous. I think
16 Ambassador Ford has become a respected figure in a lot of places for his visit to
17 Hama, which put him at considerable risk with the government, and our embassy
18 in fact had to be—security strengthened. He's demonstrated his commitment and
19 that of the United States to the Syrian people, and I thought that was a courageous
20 step that he took on a personal level.

1 Similarly, Norm Eisen has proven to be a very effective ambassador in the 9
2 months he's been on the job in the Czech Republic, and our partnership with the
3 Czechs is stronger on key national security issues, including nuclear proliferation,
4 Afghanistan, Israel, and Iran, and he's been a strong advocate for U.S. economic
5 interests.

6 Finally, Frank Ricciardone is a very distinguished public servant who's
7 achieved a lot of successes in his 9 months as Ambassador to Turkey, which is
8 critical right now to a whole bunch of our interests in the region.

9 So, that said, I don't know that anybody wants a record vote, but --

10 **SENATOR RISCH.** I do, Mr. Chairman.

11 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Senator Risch does want a record vote. Is there any
12 particular nominee you want it on or is that en bloc?

13 **SENATOR RISCH.** Well, I want to vote separately on Sherman and separately
14 on Ford, Mr. Chairman.

15 **SENATOR MENENDEZ.** Mr. Chairman.

16 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Yes, Senator Menendez.

17 **SENATOR MENENDEZ.** I want to join, and I'd like to speak.

18 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Then we're going to have—I'll just rule that we'll have an
19 individual vote on each of them. We'll try to proceed as rapidly as possible.

20 Is there any debate? Senator Isakson?

1 **SENATOR ISAKSON.** Not debate, Mr. Chairman, but I have known Wendy
2 Sherman's family for a long, long time. Her mother worked for me in Atlanta,
3 Georgia, in the 1980s and I've known Wendy since that period of time, and she's a
4 very competent individual and I'm going to support her nomination.

5 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Thank you very much, Senator Isakson.
6 Any other comments?

7 [No response.]

8 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Senator Menendez.

9 **SENATOR MENENDEZ.** Mr. Chairman, I speak for the nomination of
10 Ambassador Ricciardone. In June I had a meeting with the Ambassador in my
11 office and I appreciated the time he took to meet with me and I believed that his
12 efforts on behalf of the majority of U.S. interests are well focused in Ankara. And I
13 was prepared to support his nomination, until I received responses to the questions
14 for the record that I submitted following his nomination before this committee.

15 I asked the nominee, who has now served as the U.S. Ambassador in Turkey
16 since January of this year, about the number of Christian churches still functioning
17 in present day Turkey. His initial and incorrect response was that, quote: "Most of
18 the Christian churches functioning prior to 1915 are still operating as churches."

19 This response was so wrong as to be offensive. The archbishop of the
20 Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, His Eminence
21 Choloyan, issued a statement to rectify the facts, stating that the Ambassador's

1 statement was, quote, "so blatantly false that it cannot remain unchallenged." He
2 noted that, quote: "The facts are quite clear. From the massacre of Armenians from
3 1895 and '96 and the Armenian genocide in 1915 to the decade following the
4 establishment of the Turkish Republic, Christian houses of worship were
5 systematically destroyed or confiscated. The archives of the apostolate contain
6 hundreds of original deeds and other documentation of churches and church-
7 owned property that was confiscated."

8 After several inquiries, Ambassador Ricciardone submitted a revised
9 response, stating that, quote: "Christian community contacts in Turkey report that a
10 total of 200 to 250 churches that date to 1915 and before offer Christian worship
11 services at least once a year."

12 I understand this number to also be an overestimation. What concerns me
13 more, however, is that his response indicates that he either did not carefully review
14 the responses that were submitted in his name or, worse, that he is truly unaware of
15 the history of the Christian church in Turkey and the difficulties that Christian
16 churches continue to face in that country. His responses indicate a lack of focus or
17 interest in issues affecting those communities, particularly the Armenian
18 community, and sends a message to Turkey that the Armenian issue is not on the A
19 list.

20 We need an ambassador in Ankara that can support, defend, and advocate
21 on behalf of all the United States' interests vis a vis Turkey, certainly the question of

1 religious freedom, and the challenges that those who seek to exercise religious
2 freedom in Turkey is one of those.

3 Unfortunately, I have lost confidence in the ability of Mr. Ricciardone to take
4 that task and I will not be in support of his nomination.

5 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Well, Senator Menendez, let me say, first of all I have total
6 respect for and appreciation for the question that you asked and for your reaction to
7 the answer. It was unacceptable. It was incorrect and inappropriate. I'm not going
8 to—there are extenuating circumstances that do not have to do with Ambassador
9 Ricciardone, but in the end, because it's his answer to the committee, it does have to
10 do with him, and we all have to take that at face value.

11 The corrected text is made part of the record and he has submitted that to us,
12 and I think it really was an inadvertent oversight, certainly one which doesn't
13 diminish the distinguished record and the qualities and capacities of Frank
14 Ricciardone. I've worked with him personally in a number of places, been
15 impressed by his depth of knowledge.

16 The recent announcement that Turkey is going to host the early warning
17 radar for NATO's missile defense system was not an easy thing to get done. It was
18 a decision taken in spite of significant domestic opposition in Turkey and represents
19 a significant diplomatic success by the Ambassador. So in my judgment, this
20 discussion is very worthwhile. I'm glad you have brought it to the committee

1 today. I think it signals this committee's deep interest in this question of the
2 Christian population and Christian freedom to worship.

3 Personally, I have a huge Armenian population, as I think you know, in
4 Massachusetts. I share this. I'm the original sponsor of the Armenian resolution
5 years ago with Bob Dole. So I'm not—I don't want to give short shrift to this by any
6 imagination. But I do think the Ambassador is a qualified person and I think the
7 committee should send his nomination to the floor.

8 Senator Cardin, you wanted to make a comment?

9 **SENATOR CARDIN.** I just wanted to speak briefly in regards to Wendy
10 Sherman. I had the opportunity to chair the hearing. Mr. Chairman, I just want to
11 point out we had a record number of members of the committee during her
12 confirmation and the questions that were asked were very comprehensive, and I
13 think each member that was there was impressed by her depth of knowledge on
14 these issues.

15 I just want to underscore the importance of getting a full team available
16 during this critical time in the State Department.

17 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Thanks so much, Senator Cardin.

18 Senator Coons.

19 **SENATOR COONS.** I also attended that hearing and was quite impressed with
20 Ambassador Sherman. I look forward to supporting her nomination.

1 I just want to follow up on the concerns raised by Senator Menendez, which
2 have also been advanced by some of my constituents. I will ultimately support his
3 nomination to be ambassador, but hope that the conversation here will be an
4 opportunity to reinforce the importance of religious free exercise, in particular some
5 addressing of the historic and profound grievances of the Armenian and Greek
6 community, both on Cyprus and the mainland of the Turkish Republic, these have
7 gone far too long and deserve a more pointed and higher priority in our diplomatic
8 efforts.

9 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Thank you very much, Senator Coons. I agree with that.
10 Senator Corker.

11 **SENATOR CORKER.** I plan to support Ms. Sherman for this position. I
12 understand the hearing was quite extensive and we've gone through the notes. I do
13 think there may be some process issues. I know this has come up quickly and
14 there's been a major push from outside to make this happen. I think there may be
15 some no votes on this committee—I won't be one of those—based on just the
16 process itself. And I know for folks to get confirmed quickly there has to be
17 unanimous consent, which is sometimes difficult to occur on the Senate floor.

18 So I would just say to those who are pushing this heavily and sort of not
19 going by the rules of the committee that I would at least make the folks who are
20 going to be here today voting know aware of why it is you're pushing it so quickly
21 through the committee.

1 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Well, as I said, I think I made that clear in my initial
2 comments, but let me reiterate to everybody here. We're at, what, 13 percent in the
3 national polls, the United States Congress? And I think one of the reasons is that
4 we get stuck in places that disconnect with the American people about how fast and
5 how effectively we ought to get our business done. I just feel this very strongly.

6 Rules are meant to help guide us effectively and protect minority rights. But
7 they have to be balanced against common sense and fairness, a kind of collegiality
8 between all of us. They're not meant to rule us. They're meant to guide us and
9 provide order where there isn't order.

10 Our capacity to work together as adults is what ought to govern this kind of
11 thing, and it seems to me that when you have a compelling rationale for doing
12 something and you ask people's consent and they're part of the decisionmaking,
13 you're not stomping on anybody's rights, you're not violating anything. You're just
14 trying to accelerate the way we do business here sometimes.

15 I'd simply say to my colleagues that we are working handicapped in the
16 diplomatic arena right now all around the world, and it's probably going to get
17 tougher and tighter before it gets better and easier. That's because of the budget,
18 and we all know that. We are understaffed and underpersonned in so many
19 different places.

20 So for us not to be able to accelerate by a couple of days putting a deputy
21 secretary of State in place, at a time when all the national meetings, the international

1 meetings, take place in New York, is to say to the President: You've got to continue
2 to have less than your full team at your disposal.

3 **SENATOR CORKER.** Mr. Chairman, if I could.

4 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Yes.

5 **SENATOR CORKER.** You're singing to the choir in this room.

6 **THE CHAIRMAN.** I'm just making it part of the record.

7 **SENATOR CORKER.** I doubt many people who might think the process issue is
8 a problem are going to be reading the record. I'm just saying that what you might
9 want to do is to make a few phone calls to explain to folks, so that it's not an issue
10 when it comes to unanimous consent. It's not meant to chastise.

11 **THE CHAIRMAN.** I'll do that, Senator Corker, and you know I always try to
12 bend over backwards to have those personal communications, and I'll do that. I
13 might add, if some of those people are members of this committee it wouldn't be
14 such a bad thing for them to come to the meeting and share these thoughts with us.
15 But I will certainly reach out to them outside the procedures of the committee.

16 So, that said, we have four votes. Is there any further discussion? Senator
17 Shaheen.

18 **SENATOR SHAHEEN.** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I chaired the hearing
19 with Ambassador Ricciardone and I actually thought he did a better job in that
20 hearing of responding to the questions of religious freedom in Turkey and the

1 importance of making sure that Christians have the capacity to worship in that
2 country.

3 Having said that, I do think what Senator Menendez raises is very important
4 and is a very important message for us to send not only to the ambassador, but also
5 to Turkey, that we are concerned about that issue.

6 Having said that, I intend to vote for Ambassador Ricciardone because I
7 think he's been there since January, he's taken on some very difficult issues in his
8 capacity as ambassador during that time. This is a very delicate time for us to not
9 have an ambassador in Turkey, given the issues that are pending. We recently
10 heard that Turkey's going to suspend military relations with Israel. I think there are
11 a number of issues that are happening there right now that make it imperative that
12 we have someone with experience on the ground there to address those issues.

13 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Thank you very much, Senator Shaheen.

14 Senator Corker, let me just say to you, I really welcome from you, because
15 you're always very constructive and helpful in this process, any thoughts about
16 who specifically I might talk to in an effort to try to facilitate this. We can talk
17 afterwards. We don't have to do it now.

18 **SENATOR CORKER.** Sometimes when things like this occur they can be penny
19 wise and pound foolish, and they give people reasons not to do a unanimous
20 consent. I don't know if that will happen. It won't happen with me, but I would
21 just suggest an affirmative effort to make sure that doesn't happen.

1 **THE CHAIRMAN.** I thank you, and we will certainly make that effort.

2 So, on that note, let's proceed to the first vote. The first vote will be to send
3 the nomination of Wendy Sherman with respect to the Under Secretary of State for
4 Political Affairs. The Clerk will call the roll.

5 **MS. OURSLER.** Mrs. Boxer.

6 **SENATOR BOXER.** Aye.

7 **MS. OURSLER.** Mr. Menendez.

8 **SENATOR MENENDEZ.** Aye.

9 **MS. OURSLER.** Mr. Cardin.

10 **SENATOR CARDIN.** Aye.

11 **MS. OURSLER.** Mr. Casey.

12 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Aye by proxy.

13 **MS. OURSLER.** Mr. Webb.

14 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Aye by proxy.

15 **MS. OURSLER.** Mrs. Shaheen.

16 **SENATOR SHAHEEN.** Aye.

17 **MS. OURSLER.** Mr. Coons.

18 **SENATOR COONS.** Aye.

19 **MS. OURSLER.** Mr. Durbin.

20 **SENATOR DURBIN.** Aye.

21 **MS. OURSLER.** Mr. Udall.

1 **SENATOR UDALL.** Aye.
2 **MS. OURSLER.** Mr. Lugar.
3 **SENATOR LUGAR.** Aye.
4 **MS. OURSLER.** Mr. Corker.
5 **SENATOR CORKER.** Aye.
6 **MS. OURSLER.** Mr. Risch.
7 **SENATOR RISCH.** No.
8 **MS. OURSLER.** Mr. Rubio.
9 **SENATOR LUGAR.** Votes no by proxy.
10 **MS. OURSLER.** Mr. Inhofe.
11 **SENATOR LUGAR.** Votes no by proxy.
12 **MS. OURSLER.** Mr. DeMint.
13 **SENATOR LUGAR.** Votes no by proxy.
14 **MS. OURSLER.** Mr. Isakson.
15 **SENATOR ISAKSON.** Aye.
16 **MS. OURSLER.** Mr. Barrasso.
17 **SENATOR LUGAR.** Votes no by proxy.
18 **MS. OURSLER.** Mr. Lee.
19 **SENATOR LUGAR.** Votes no by proxy.
20 **MS. OURSLER.** Mr. Chairman.
21 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Aye.

1 **MS. OURSLER.** 13 ayes, 6 nays.

2 **THE CHAIRMAN.** The vote is approved.

3 Yes?

4 **SENATOR SHAHEEN.** You mentioned that we were going to have four votes.
5 We actually have five nominees on our list. Has somebody else dropped off?

6 **THE CHAIRMAN.** No, that's my fault. It's just my mistake. I meant four
7 nominees plus the Under Secretary. So it's my leaving out the Under Secretary.

8 So now we can do a voice vote on these and record those that want to be
9 recorded as nays, if that meets with the approval of the committee.

10 So for John Heffern of Virginia to be U.S. Ambassador to Armenia, all those
11 in favor say aye.

12 [A chorus of ayes.]

13 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Opposed, nay.

14 [No response.]

15 **THE CHAIRMAN.** The ayes have it and his nomination will be sent to the floor
16 unanimously.

17 **SENATOR LUGAR.** Wait just a second, Mr. Chairman, to make sure.

18 [Pause.]

19 **SENATOR LUGAR.** All right.

20 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Frank Ricciardone of Virginia to be U.S. Ambassador to
21 Turkey. All those in favor say aye.

1 [A chorus of ayes.]

2 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Opposed, nay.

3 [A chorus of noes.]

4 **THE CHAIRMAN.** The ayes have it and Senator Menendez, Senator Risch --

5 **SENATOR BOXER.** Senator Boxer.

6 **THE CHAIRMAN.** —and Senator Boxer are recorded as nays.

7 The Honorable Robert Ford of Vermont to be U.S. Ambassador to the Syrian

8 Arab Republic. All those in favor say aye.

9 [A chorus of ayes.]

10 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Opposed, nay.

11 **SENATOR RISCH.** No.

12 **THE CHAIRMAN.** The ayes have it and his nomination is sent to the floor.

13 Senator Risch will be recorded as nay.

14 **SENATOR LUGAR.** And Senator DeMint.

15 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Senator DeMint.

16 **SENATOR LUGAR.** And Senator Lee.

17 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Senator Lee.

18 **SENATOR LUGAR.** And that's it.

19 **THE CHAIRMAN.** As nays.

20 **SENATOR LUGAR.** This was on Ford?

21 **THE CHAIRMAN.** That's on Ford.

1 Norm Eisen to be U.S. Ambassador to the Czech Republic. All those in favor
2 say aye.

3 [A chorus of ayes.]

4 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Opposed, nay.

5 **SENATOR RISCH.** No.

6 **THE CHAIRMAN.** The ayes have it. Senator Risch is recorded as nay.

7 **SENATOR LUGAR.** And also Senator Barrasso.

8 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Senator Barrasso will be recorded nay.

9 **SENATOR LUGAR.** That's it.

10 **THE CHAIRMAN.** That's it.

11 So on that note, I thank everybody. It's been helpful and we'll get to work on
12 sitting down with some of those other folks. Thank you all very much. I appreciate
13 it.

14 We stand adjourned.

[WHEREUPON, AT 2:38 P.M., THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED.]