
Business Meeting

Tuesday, March 11, 2014

UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON
FOREIGN RELATIONS
113TH Congress, Second Session

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

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

1 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:20 p.m. in Room S-116, The Capitol,
2 Hon. Robert Menendez, chairman of the committee, presiding.

3 **PRESENT.** Senators Menendez, Boxer, Cardin, Shaheen, Coons, Udall, Murphy,
4 Kaine, Markey, Corker, Rubio, Johnson, and Flake.

5 **THE CHAIRMAN.** The meeting will come to order.

6 We have four treaties on the agenda, five resolutions, and 12 nominees.

7 I know that Senator Shaheen, who is the author of one of the resolutions, along
8 with others, has another meeting to go to. So I would be happy to recognize her on
9 International Women's Day, S.Res. 376.

10 **SENATOR SHAHEEN.** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you and Senator
11 Corker for all of your help in getting the resolution negotiated that is before us.

12 I would just like to point out that Saturday was International Women's Day. We
13 have been celebrating that as International Women's Day since 1911, and this resolution
14 is to recognize International Women's Day again.

15 The resolution honors the economic, political, and social achievements of women
16 and it recognizes the barriers that women around the world in too many places still

1 continue to face in their effort to achieve human rights and opportunities. I think the
2 committee is supportive of this resolution.

3 But I would just like to also say that sometimes we do not appreciate the
4 significance that these kinds of actions by the Foreign Relations Committee and the
5 United States Senate has for people around the world, in this case women who in so
6 many countries, unfortunately, still face so many obstacles. And so it really does make
7 a difference for us to be on the record talking about the importance of advancing
8 opportunities and human rights for women.

9 So, Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for letting me speak first and hopefully
10 all of the committee will support the resolution.

11 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Thank you, Senator Shaheen. I know that I am supportive of it. I
12 am sure others as well. We will get to that in a moment.

13 While we have a voting quorum, we have four treaties on the agenda today to
14 consider en bloc that will strengthen the U.S. fishing industry, our coastal communities,
15 protect consumers, and support sustainable fisheries across the globe. The committee
16 has received no opposition to any of these treaties, has heard support from the National
17 Fisheries Institute, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, the Joint Ocean
18 Commission Initiative, the Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers, and dozens of other fishing
19 associations, businesses and restaurants.

1 The agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate Illegal,
2 Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing is the first global treaty to focus specifically on
3 pirate fishing and implements minimum standards for states to control port access by
4 foreign fishing vessels, ensures that illegally harvested fish do not enter the
5 international stream of commerce.

6 The Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fishery
7 Resources in the North Pacific Ocean will establish the North Pacific Fisheries
8 Commission, which will adopt and implement conservation and management measures
9 for unregulated fish stocks in the North Pacific. It includes robust monitoring standards
10 to help prevent vulnerable marine ecosystems or species in the convention area.

11 The Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fishery
12 Resources in the South Pacific will establish the South Pacific Regional Fisheries
13 Management Organization to protect habitats and marine ecosystems, develop effective
14 monitoring, compliance, and enforcement procedures to prevent pirate fishing.

15 And lastly, the Amendment to the Convention on Future Multilateral
16 Cooperation in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries updates the 1979 convention, brings it
17 in line with modern international fisheries governance while reforming the budget
18 contributions in a way that is expected to reduce payments by the United States to the
19 organization by a substantial amount.

20 Senator Corker, would you like to speak to any of these?

1 **SENATOR CORKER.** I am going to make the same lengthy comments. Just kidding.

2 [Laughter.]

3 **SENATOR CORKER.** I want to thank all the people on the committee but also off the
4 committee that have specific interests regarding these treaties. I think you and I both
5 have been — I know we have been approached by a number of people off the
6 committee in particular that have a lot of interest in this. And I appreciate the way you
7 and others on the committee have worked to make this happen. So thank you, and I
8 support them also.

9 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Thank you for your cooperation.

10 Is there any member who wishes to speak to any of these treaties?

11 **SENATOR MARKEY.** Mr. Chairman?

12 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Senator Markey?

13 **SENATOR MARKEY.** Thank you.

14 And it is just to say there is rampant illegal fishing going on around the world
15 and it damages our fishermen, our seafood industry, our restaurants, and these treaties
16 really go a long way towards policing that globally, which really will help to enhance
17 the domestic American fishing marketplace in a way that we have not seen.

18 And I thank you and Senator Corker for processing this in very bipartisan
19 fashion.

20 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Thank you for chairing some of the hearings that we had.

1 **SENATOR CORKER.** Massachusetts happens to be one of those places that cares
2 about these treaties.

3 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Any other member wish to speak to any of the treaties?

4 [No response.]

5 **THE CHAIRMAN.** If not, I would like to consider the resolutions of advice and
6 consent for these treaties by voice vote, if there is no objection.

7 All those in favor, say aye.

8 [Chorus of ayes.]

9 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Opposed, say no.

10 [No response.]

11 **THE CHAIRMAN.** The ayes have it, and the treaties are favorably reported to the
12 Senate.

13 The next order of business are five resolutions.

14 S.Res. 361, introduced by Senators Cardin, Rubio, Corker, and myself,
15 recognizing the threats to freedom of the press and expression in the People's Republic
16 of China to take meaningful steps to improve freedom of expression as befits a
17 responsible international stakeholder.

18 S.Res. 365 on Venezuela. In the past month, the Venezuelan Government has
19 sanctioned violence against protestors, jailed and persecuted its critics, sought to silence
20 press freedoms. The resolution calls for an end to violence, asks the OAS to facilitate

1 dialogue, calls on President Obama to enact individualized sanctions against those
2 responsible for killing peaceful protestors. And I believe we must take a stand in the
3 hemisphere against this kind of violence and violation of human rights.

4 S.Res. 375, the Central African Republic, by Senators Coons and Flake concerning
5 the crisis in the Central African Republic, supports the U.S. and international efforts to
6 end the violence, protect the people of the Central African Republic, and address the
7 root causes of the conflict.

8 I understand that Senator Coons has a couple amendments to his resolution, and
9 I will recognize you in a minute to offer them. I am trying to get through all of these.

10 And also, as we heard, S.Res. 376, International Women's Day, which I think
11 Senator Shaheen has done a good job of discussing.

12 And S.Res. 377, Greek Independence Day.

13 I would seek to move them en bloc subject to members' comments and the two
14 amendments that Senator Coons has.

15 Senator Corker?

16 **SENATOR CORKER.** No. Thank you for the work. I appreciate all the members who
17 have brought these interests before us, and I support all of them also and look forward
18 to hearing the amendments from Senator Coons.

19 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Senator Cardin?

20 **SENATOR CARDIN.** Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for your help.

1 I just want to underscore the importance of the resolution in regards to the
2 People’s Republic of China urging them to take steps to improve the freedom of
3 expression. China is becoming, as I think everyone here would acknowledge, a much
4 more important player in the international scene in so many different arenas. So I think
5 it is important for us to point out the expectation that China will take more aggressive
6 steps to improve some of its basic rights.

7 It is interesting. Reporters Without Borders ranks China 173rd out of 179 in
8 terms of press freedoms. So I think it is important to discuss the resolution.

9 I just want to thank the chairman and thank the ranking member and thank
10 Senator Rubio for his critical help in the subcommittee.

11 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Senator Coons, would you like to offer your amendments and
12 speak to your resolution?

13 **SENATOR COONS.** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes. If I might offer an amendment
14 in the nature of a substitute. It makes very minor technical changes. It updates
15 numbers and makes a few otherwise non-substantive changes.

16 The larger resolution, if I might just take a moment. I am grateful to Senator
17 Flake for his partnership in moving this forward. We held a hearing last December in
18 the Africa Subcommittee on the ongoing atrocities in the Central African Republic. As
19 many of you know, there have been months and months of violence that has resulted in
20 more than a million refugees. Over the half of the population is desperately in need of

1 humanitarian assistance. There have been horrific documented stories of mass killings,
2 lynchings, an exodus of Muslim citizens of CAR.

3 I am pleased the UN Secretary-General has recommended the UN peacekeeping
4 mission to augment the current AU-led mission with U.S. support. They are waiting for
5 action by the Security Council.

6 This resolution condemns the violence, atrocities, and abuses committed in CAR,
7 and calls on our President to work with our multilateral partners to develop a strategy
8 to support cessation of violence and I think to deal with what is a significant
9 humanitarian challenge in Central Africa.

10 So I would like to thank the chair and ranking and, again, Senator Flake for his
11 partnership.

12 **THE CHAIRMAN.** I would like to vote on these two amendments now and then
13 consider any other comments, and then after voting on the amendments, consider all
14 the resolutions en bloc, subject to anybody else's comments.

15 So all those in favor of the amendments will say aye.

16 [Chorus of ayes.]

17 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Opposed will say no.

18 [No response.]

19 **THE CHAIRMAN.** The ayes have it and the resolution is now amended.

1 Is there any member who wishes to speak to any of the resolutions? Senator
2 Rubio?

3 **SENATOR RUBIO.** So we do not lose a quorum, do you want to vote on them and I
4 will reserve my comments?

5 **THE CHAIRMAN.** That would be great.

6 So I would move all of the resolutions that I have spoken about in order. If there
7 are no other amendments, I will move that the resolutions be considered, as amended,
8 en bloc by voice vote. Without objection.

9 All those in favor, say aye.

10 [Chorus of ayes.]

11 **THE CHAIRMAN.** All those opposed, say no.

12 [No response.]

13 **THE CHAIRMAN.** The resolutions are favorably reported.

14 We now have 12 nominees to consider en bloc, and then I will come back to any
15 comments any member wants to make. My understanding is that there is no objection,
16 and so is there anyone who wishes to speak to the nominees?

17 [No response.]

18 **THE CHAIRMAN.** If not, I will move the 12 nominees to be considered en bloc.

19 All those in favor will say aye.

20 [Chorus of ayes.]

1 **THE CHAIRMAN.** All those opposed will say no.

2 [No response.]

3 **THE CHAIRMAN.** The ayes have it and the nominees are favorably reported.

4 At this time, I would be happy to accept any comments.

5 **SENATOR RUBIO.** Just thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the speed at which the
6 committee moved on the Venezuelan resolution. This is an issue that is kind of lost in
7 the news lately, given some of the other things that are going on around the world.

8 A 30-second synopsis for those who have not followed it. We have a very
9 serious crime problem in Venezuelan. The students in Venezuela protesting crimes that
10 occurred on campus took to the streets a few weeks ago to protest. The government
11 cracked down, but not on the criminals. They cracked down on the students leading the
12 broader protests. And what you have now are all-out acts of violence not just
13 committed by uniformed agents of the government, but they have these groups they set
14 up called colectivos which are basically militias of un-uniformed individuals riding
15 motorcycles armed with guns and weapons who are pulling up to these protests and
16 basically firing into the crowd.

17 There are now 20 people dead in Venezuela, over 500 injured. Over a thousand
18 have been jailed. Of the 20, 11 have gunshot wounds directly attributable to these
19 government groups. Another one was run over by a government vehicle. This is all
20 occurring right underneath our nose in this hemisphere.

1 And so I would encourage as many of our colleagues as possible to cosponsor
2 this.

3 Here is my last point. When I first got to the Senate, I used to see all these
4 resolutions and say, well, this is just paper. What does this matter? This matters. They
5 pay attention to this.

6 I did an interview on CNN International a few weeks ago, and I have heard
7 repeatedly from students in Venezuela who saw the interview and were uplifted by it
8 because what does the government and what do oppressors tell people when they rise
9 up and speak on behalf of their rights. Nobody cares about you. Nobody is paying
10 attention. You do not matter to anybody. The fact that the United States of America
11 and the U.S. Senate recognize what is happening in Venezuela and speaks out, as we
12 have done here today, matters to these people. It truly does inspire them and it lets
13 them know not only are they not forgotten, but that we care and that we are on their
14 side. And I think that is important.

15 Anytime in the world that people stand up and acclaim their universal rights as
16 human beings to freely express themselves and to address their legitimate concerns
17 about the direction of their country, they should not be met with bullets. And that is
18 what is happening in Venezuela, and every time that happens, the people of our
19 country need to be firmly on their side.

1 Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for moving on this so quickly. Thank you for
2 sponsoring it, and I would encourage as many of you as possible to cosponsor it as well.

3 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Thank you.

4 Senator Kaine?

5 **SENATOR KAINE.** Mr. Chair, I would like to be added as a cosponsor.

6 One of the reasons people may not know the story as well as others is not only
7 other world events, but there is a crackdown on the press in Venezuela as well. CNN
8 itself. It has been suggested that they be thrown out of the country because of some of
9 their reporting. And I think this resolution is kind of equivalent to the China resolution
10 earlier, and it also speaks for journalistic and expression freedom which is important.

11 **THE CHAIRMAN.** I want to share Senator Rubio's concerns, and I appreciate his
12 advocacy here. Venezuela is at the heart Latin America, and its people, despite having
13 huge oil reserves, cannot get basic foodstuffs on the shelves of the stores in the country.
14 It has a 57-58 percent inflation rate and it has a 1 percent gross domestic product
15 growth in its economy. It should be doing far better. And the consequences in
16 Venezuela, in addition to all the human rights and democracy questions that Senator
17 Rubio so eloquently spoke to, also has consequences. If we have a challenge in
18 Venezuela that dissolves into greater civil unrest than the consequences and an
19 economy that ultimately cannot sustain itself based upon the incredible super-inflation
20 that is taking place, there is a ripple effect through all types of countries in the

1 hemisphere that are presently receiving the largesse of the Venezuelan Government in
2 free oil and/or reduced oil deposits. That would have a ripple effect throughout the
3 hemisphere and Central America.

4 This is a serious issue. The chair intends to work with others to go beyond an
5 expression of the resolution and look at some legislation. But I appreciate the
6 leadership that has been shown here on a bipartisan basis.

7 Senator Cardin?

8 **SENATOR CARDIN.** I fully concur in the comments made about Venezuela.

9 I just really want to underscore the seriousness of what is happening in Ukraine.
10 I know you and the ranking member are working on a resolution, and I just appreciate
11 the joint leadership of this committee working to resolve issues so that we can speak
12 with one voice. What is happening with Russia's interference in an independent
13 country is outrageous, and I know that we all want to provide the appropriate relief to
14 Ukraine so that the government can move forward and the appropriate accountabilities
15 for those who are interfering with the independence of the Ukraine. I just really wanted
16 to underscore the importance of the work that our two leaders are doing on this
17 committee and look forward to, I hope, an early resolution that we can move forward.

18 **THE CHAIRMAN.** I appreciate the Senator's comments. Sometimes time is certainly
19 of the essence. The Ukraine is an example of that. Time is of the essence to make an

1 impact. And the ranking member and I are working towards getting things done. I
2 expect we ultimately will.

3 **SENATOR CORKER.** I could not agree more that time is of the essence.

4 **THE CHAIRMAN.** If there is no other member seeking to speak, this business meeting
5 is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 2:35 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]