

BUSINESS MEETING

Thursday, December 13, 2018

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

1 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m., in Room S-116, The
2 Capitol, Hon. Bob Corker, chairman of the committee, presiding.

3 **PRESENT.** Senators Corker [presiding], Risch, Rubio, Johnson, Flake,
4 Gardner, Young, Barrasso, Isakson, Portman, Paul, Menendez, Cardin, Udall,
5 Murphy, Kaine, and Markey.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BOB CORKER,
U.S. SENATOR FROM TENNESSEE**

6 **THE CHAIRMAN.** The Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

7 I want to thank everyone for being here today, and I want to thank
8 Senator Menendez and his staff for allowing us to do what we are doing today. I
9 think it is very important for our country. So thank you so much for your
10 cooperation.

11 I also want to thank folks for the way the debate is taking place on the
12 floor right now. I had to say that with us limiting amendments to germane

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1 amendments, and what is happening, I think is an interesting debate, a good one
2 for our country, and I thank people for the way in which that is occurring.

3 Now there are two things I want to do prior to moving to nominations,
4 and I would hope you will not cause me to read out the names, and cause me to
5 butcher their names, that we could just do it --

6 [Laughter.]

7 **THE CHAIRMAN.** -- without me reading names out. But I want to do two
8 things quickly, if I could.

9 First of all, I want to thank the democratic staff, and Senator Menendez,
10 and the democratic senators for wishing to do something today that I think
11 should be done. This is not home cooking. We did not make this happen. They
12 are pushing this. But they are recognizing through this resolution, and we
13 together are, the great service of Todd Womack, my chief of staff.

14 Let me just read this quickly.

15 [Laughter.]

16 **THE CHAIRMAN.** "Whereas Todd Womack has served as an experienced
17 and accomplished aide to Senator Bob Corker during the Senator's tenure as

1 mayor of Chattanooga, two winning Senate campaigns, and two terms in the
2 Senate.

3 Whereas Todd Womack has attracted a talented and devoted staff in the
4 senator's personal, state, and committee offices who reflect Senator Corker's
5 devotion to providing principled public service on behalf of the people of
6 Tennessee."

7 And I will keep on -- it says a lot of other wonderful things.

8 [Laughter.]

9 **THE CHAIRMAN.** But I have to say I could not work with a finer person,
10 and he has done an outstanding job. And you all will miss him.

11 [Applause.]

12 **THE CHAIRMAN.** So there is one other -- first of all, I want to welcome
13 Cheryl Flake. Please stand up.

14 [Applause.]

15 **THE CHAIRMAN.** We may have one more --

16 **VOICE.** I gave her a standing ovation, Jeff.

1 **THE CHAIRMAN.** We have one more -- we may have one more committee
2 meeting, but since we may not, it is the appropriate time to honor our great
3 friend, Jeff Flake.

4 He has been a member of the Committee on Foreign Relations since 2013,
5 serving as ranking member of the Subcommittee on African Affairs and Global
6 Health in the 113th Congress, and as its chairman in the 114th and 115th.

7 "Whereas as a member of the committee, he has conducted himself in a
8 manner that reflects his belief that domestic politics ends at the water's edge, and
9 that the United States speaks with one voice on matters of foreign relations.

10 Whereas he has fought to reassert Congress's authority, Article I authority,
11 especially in the realm of foreign relations, by introducing bipartisan legislation
12 to update the 2001 authorization for the use of force.

13 Whereas his previous experience, and living in South Africa, Zimbabwe,
14 Namibia, has informed his leadership of the African Affairs subcommittee.

15 Whereas as chairman of the subcommittee, he has worked on legislation to
16 reauthorize the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act to bring electricity to parts
17 of Africa that lack it, and to allow the Millennium Challenge Corporation to enter
18 into current compacts with African countries.

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1 Whereas he has worked in a bipartisan fashion to pass into law the
2 Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt Wildlife Trafficking Act of 2016, a bill that
3 enhanced tools available to the federal government to fight wildlife trafficking
4 and poaching around the world.

5 Whereas he introduced and pushed through the passage of the Zimbabwe
6 Democracy and Economic Recovery Amendment Act of 2018, to update U.S.
7 policy towards Zimbabwe, which was signed into law on August the 8th, 2018.

8 Whereas he has been an advocate for regular budgetary order and
9 responsible steward of taxpayer dollars.

10 Whereas he will retire from the Senate at the conclusion of the 115th
11 Congress on January 3rd, 2019.

12 Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Committee on Foreign Relations
13 expresses to Jeff Flake its admiration, appreciation, and high regard, and further
14 be resolved as the committee extends to Senator Flake its most sincere best
15 wishes for the future, our friend, Jeff Flake.”

16 [Applause.]

17 **SENATOR MENENDEZ.** Mr. Chairman, if I may.

18 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Absolutely.

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1 [Laughter.]

2 **SENATOR MENENDEZ.** I said a lot about Todd the last time, and I will just
3 echo everything the resolution says. It has really been a collegial relationship,
4 and his good demeanor and humor, as well as his commitment to the goals of the
5 committee, and to you, as chairman, have helped us do some extraordinary
6 things. And I want to congratulate him again.

7 I want Senator Flake to know that I did sign his resolution.

8 [Laughter.]

9 **SENATOR MENENDEZ.** No. On a serious note, I have admired Senator
10 Flake, even though we have one passionate disagreement, but we have never
11 been disagreeable about it. I got to know Jeff a lot better when the gang of eight
12 put together comprehensive immigration reform, and passed it through the
13 Senate with an extraordinary bipartisan vote.

14 And I saw the willingness he had to get to a solution on a critical issue,
15 and use some political capital, which around here is difficult sometimes to get
16 people to use, political capital to make it happen.

17 I have appreciated his leadership as it relates to Africa and his work with
18 Senator Coons, which has been extraordinary.

1 So I just want to salute you as you move on to your next chapter of
2 whatever you are going to do.

3 **SENATOR FLAKE.** Thank you.

4 **SENATOR MENENDEZ.** Thank you.

5 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Senator Rubio.

6 **SENATOR RUBIO.** Just to echo some of that. So I did not know Jeff Flake
7 before we served in the Senate together, but I knew about him, because this Cuba
8 thing is a pretty big deal in Miami, and Jeff's on --

9 [Laughter.]

10 **THE CHAIRMAN.** What about Venezuela?

11 [Laughter.]

12 **SENATOR RUBIO.** Well, that was not an issue back then. I know it has
13 become an issue now.

14 But I have gotten to know Jeff in our time here together. I raise that only
15 because, you know, from time to time, you know, people that are on my side on
16 that issue would say, you know, "How can you be friends with that guy?" I said,
17 "Because I know him personally," and I know that his motives on this and

1 everything else are driven by his moral compass, which I think is as strong as
2 anyone I have ever worked with in this process.

3 So I am proud to be his friend, and I served alongside him. I am not going
4 to lie. There are times when we were having some discussions about Cuba
5 where I wish he would have stayed on that deserted island --

6 [Laughter.]

7 **SENATOR RUBIO.** -- for a little longer while we settled those issues. But all
8 kidding aside, I will miss very much working with him.

9 I know he will be working, he will be out there, because I know that he is
10 motivated by doing what he thinks is right. There is no other reason for -- he
11 does it because he thinks it is right. And when someone is doing things out of a
12 strong moral and personal conviction, you can disagree about the way to achieve
13 something, and still respect what it is that drives them. And I wanted to share
14 that today, and just tell him how -- I am honored to be your friend, and have
15 served with you, and will miss you on everything except Cuba.

16 [Laughter.]

17 **SENATOR RUBIO.** I am kidding. I am kidding.

18 [Laughter.]

1 **SENATOR RUBIO.** I will miss him on everything.

2 **SENATOR CARDIN.** First, I want to underscore how much we are going to
3 miss Todd. I had the honor of being ranking member, and I must tell you,
4 sometimes it is very difficult to deal with Chairman Corker, but at least we had
5 Todd.

6 [Laughter.]

7 **SENATOR CARDIN.** So I thank you very much for your dedication and your
8 ability really to underscore the goal and to get to the goal, which is what we are
9 all trying to do here, and figuring out a way to accommodate each other in
10 accomplishing that. And you serve Tennessee well, you serve the committee
11 well, you serve Corker well, and wish you only the best.

12 Senator Flake, I had a chance to really get to know Cheryl and Jeff when
13 we were traveling to Africa. And to see what he has done in affecting people's
14 lives in Africa. He started as a missionary, but you saw the same commitment
15 today as we were traveling through meeting with different groups, affecting
16 people's lives.

1 Jeff is certainly motivated by all the right reasons for public service, and it
2 has been a real honor to serve with you in the United States Senate. We are going
3 to miss you, both democrats and republicans.

4 Quite frankly, I like your passion on Cuba. I just want you to know that.

5 [Laughter.]

6 **SENATOR CARDIN.** There goes my relationship with Senator Rubio.

7 [Laughter.]

8 **SENATOR CARDIN.** But really appreciate the fact that you were committed
9 to the values and principles, and always stuck by them. Congratulations.

10 **SENATOR GARDNER.** Mr. Chair --

11 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Yes, sir?

12 **SENATOR GARDNER.** -- if I could, too. I first learned about Jeff Flake, I
13 think -- what year was the big 60 Minutes episode, Jeff? 2007. I remember that,
14 to this day, watching a 60-minute show on this young legislator in Arizona, and
15 the work that he was doing on a 60 Minutes episode, what a nerd I was, and to
16 remember that 11 years ago. And now he's an old legislator, and it's really great
17 to --

18 [Laughter.]

1 **SENATOR GARDNER.** -- work with Jeff.

2 I was reminded two weeks ago, when we had the business meeting,
3 reminded of the expertise that he's brought on Africa. And you know, to have
4 that expertise, I think will truly -- it was great for us, and will be truly missed.

5 But the river we were talking about two weeks ago, Jeff leans over to me,
6 and he says, "I have swum across that river, with crocodiles and alligators."

7 **SENATOR MENENDEZ.** The Okavango.

8 **SENATOR GARDNER.** The Okavango.

9 I mean there is no one on this committee that can replace that experience.

10 [Laughter.]

11 **SENATOR GARDNER.** I appreciate the long-tooth ownership you give us.

12 Thanks.

13 **SENATOR MENENDEZ.** We may not have swum across that river, but
14 there's a lot of crocodiles and alligators around.

15 **SENATOR GARDNER.** That's right. That's right.

16 [Laughter.]

1 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Well, listen, thank you all for recognizing two
2 outstanding individuals, and I think the committee will miss them both greatly,
3 and thank you for taking the time to do that.

4 And I look forward to interacting with Jeff many times in the future, and
5 obviously, Todd and I will be in the same office building in Chattanooga, doing
6 different things, but I could not serve with two better people. And I thank them
7 both.

8 So with that, what I would like to do is I would like to approve the list in
9 full, if it is possible. We do have two holdover letters. One for Mr. Cooper to be
10 Assistant Secretary for State for Political-Military Affairs, and one for Mr.
11 Schenker to be Assistant Secretary for State for Near Eastern Affairs. We will
12 consider these nominations at the next business meeting, should that be
13 appropriate.

14 But, again, I cannot thank everyone at this table enough. I know we sort
15 of had a -- we have increasing hostilities, if you will, as it relates to these
16 nominations, and now we are going to be able to move them. So I thank you for
17 that.

18 If there is no further -- would you like to make some comments?

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1 **SENATOR MENENDEZ.** Yes, Mr. Chairman, just briefly.

2 First, I hope that as we are dealing with the Yemen resolution on the floor,
3 that I look forward to working with Chairman Risch on hopefully a bipartisan
4 piece of legislation that creates real accountability for Saudi Arabia, and then the
5 Yemen situation, and I am certainly going to be pursuing that vigorously in the
6 next Congress with colleagues on both sides of the aisle. At times --

7 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Yeah.

8 **SENATOR MENENDEZ.** -- to be able to do something.

9 But I just want to speak to two of the nominees for a moment. Armenia
10 and the Caucasus region continue to be vital to regional and global security.
11 According to the OSCE, Armenia's elections over the weekend met international
12 standards, and we look forward to supporting the government's efforts to build
13 strong democratic institutions and a vibrant Armenian economy, and oppose any
14 efforts to violate Armenia's sovereignty.

15 Now the one thing -- I am going to vote for this nominee, but throughout
16 my time in the Senate I have advocated for an honest accounting of the Armenian
17 genocide. I believe we have a moral imperative to recognize the atrocities that
18 were committed against the Armenian people.

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1 Ms. Tracy's experience in Russia and Central Asia positions her to help
2 navigate U.S. policy in this critical time. I am going to support her nomination,
3 but expect to work closely with her on how she will encourage an honest
4 acknowledgment of the Armenian genocide, support Armenia's ongoing efforts
5 to ensure accountable, citizen-responsive governance, and support efforts to
6 reach a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

7 Lastly, I support Mr. Litzenberger's nomination. We expect to have close
8 and continuing dialogue with him on how he will urge the Azeris to step back
9 from any threatening behavior that could disrupt the line of contact in Nagorno-
10 Karabakh, support respect for human rights, and support efforts to reach a
11 peaceful settlement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

12 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Any other comments?

14 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** Mr. Chairman?

15 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Yes, sir.

16 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** I do want to speak briefly on Ukraine. I do not know
17 if that is appropriate now, or just -- I know how these things end after the vote.
18 Everybody leaves.

1 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Well, why don't you go ahead and do that.

2 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** Okay.

3 **THE CHAIRMAN.** I know you want to take a minute to do so.

4 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** Yeah. It won't be long.

5 First of all, I want to thank all my colleagues for their strong support for
6 the resolution on the Kerch Strait. I was in Ukraine last weekend, spent more
7 than two hours with President Poroshenko. I cannot tell you how much he
8 appreciated that strong support, so I want to thank you for that.

9 But I also did want to gauge your interest on another resolution. I think
10 Putin's strategy here is very clear. He is going to try to weaken those ports, port
11 cities, starve them off. He's clearly violating his agreement with Ukraine, as it
12 relates to freedom for navigation of the Kerch Strait.

13 So I was pleased that the European Parliament apparently today has
14 passed a resolution to stop the Nord Stream 2. So I would like to propose and
15 work with committee members on a resolution calling for the halt to construction
16 on the Nord Stream and call for a very strong freedom of navigation operation at
17 the Kerch Strait to ensure navigation.

1 I think it is critical. I am concerned that we are not going to have that kind
2 of strong response, and if we do not, it will be perceived as weakness, and Putin
3 will just continue on with his next steps.

4 So, you know, we do not have to discuss it here, but on the floor during
5 our votes I would love to talk to members in terms of exactly how we can do
6 that, and what level support there would be for that kind of resolution.

7 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Thank you.

8 **SENATOR PORTMAN.** Mr. Chair.

9 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Thank you for your leadership on that issue.

10 Yes, sir?

11 **SENATOR PORTMAN.** I think Senator Johnson raises a really good point. I
12 did have an opportunity to meet with the ambassador, and also the vice-admiral
13 from the Ukrainian Navy yesterday. And this commander walked through what
14 has happened with regards to the ships and the sailors, clearly in violation of
15 everything, international law, certainly the agreement with Ukraine.

16 I am concerned we have not stepped up strongly enough, not just the
17 United States, but as a global --

18 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Yeah.

1 **SENATOR PORTMAN.** -- response, and specifically the disinformation
2 campaign that went on in advance of taking these sailors captive, shows that this
3 is a hybrid and well-thought-out campaign by Russia. And I think we need to be
4 cognizant of that, too, and push back as well on what many have talked about
5 here, which is the disinformation that is going on around the world.

6 So I do think it would be appropriate for this committee to start a process
7 to allow the Senate to speak to this issue.

8 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Thank you. Yes.

9 **SENATOR MURPHY.** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I look forward
10 to working with Senator Johnson on that resolution. This is not all coincidental.
11 It is an attempt to weaken -- lead up to the elections.

12 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Yeah.

13 **SENATOR MURPHY.** Can I just ask a question as to the nominees? Kyle
14 McCarter for -- I at least have an objection to that nomination. Is that part of the
15 lot of nominees, or is there going to be a separate vote?

16 **THE CHAIRMAN.** It is. Let me do some math.

1 So I was going to hold over, if we had problems, but if you want to have a
2 separate vote on him, we will do so. So it will be -- the vote we will call for the
3 nominations will be everyone but him. Okay?

4 **SENATOR MURPHY.** That would be fine. Thank you.

5 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Okay? And we have the two holdovers that I mentioned
6 before. So with that, is there a motion to approve the list of nominees that we
7 have before us, minus the two that are held over, and the FSO List. Well, and
8 minus -- and minus McCarter. Minus McCarter. Yes. Yes.

9 **SENATOR RISCH.** So moved.

10 **SENATOR RUBIO.** Second.

11 **THE CHAIRMAN.** So moved and second it.

12 All those in favor, say aye.

13 [A chorus of ayes.]

14 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Opposed.

15 [No response.]

16 **THE CHAIRMAN.** The ayes have it.

17 Now we will have a vote on McCarter, to Kenya. It will be a roll call vote,
18 so clerk if you will call the roll.

1 THE CLERK. Mr. Risch?

2 SENATOR RISCH. Aye.

3 THE CLERK. Mr. Rubio?

4 SENATOR RUBIO. Aye.

5 THE CLERK. Mr. Johnson?

6 SENATOR JOHNSON. Aye.

7 THE CLERK. Mr. Flake?

8 SENATOR FLAKE. Aye.

9 THE CLERK. Mr. Gardner?

10 SENATOR GARDNER. Aye.

11 THE CLERK. Mr. Young?

12 SENATOR YOUNG. Aye.

13 THE CLERK. Mr. Barrasso?

14 SENATOR BARRASSO. Aye.

15 THE CLERK. Mr. Isakson?

16 SENATOR ISAKSON. Aye.

17 THE CLERK. Mr. Portman?

18 SENATOR PORTMAN. Aye.

1 THE CLERK. Mr. Paul?

2 SENATOR PAUL. Aye.

3 THE CLERK. Mr. Menendez?

4 SENATOR MENENDEZ. No.

5 THE CLERK. Mr. Cardin?

6 SENATOR CARDIN. No.

7 THE CLERK. Mrs. Shaheen?

8 SENATOR MENENDEZ. No, by proxy.

9 THE CLERK. Mr. Coons?

10 SENATOR MENENDEZ. Yes, by proxy.

11 THE CLERK. Mr. Udall?

12 SENATOR UDALL. No.

13 THE CLERK. Mr. Murphy?

14 SENATOR MURPHY. No.

15 THE CLERK. Mr. Kaine?

16 SENATOR KAINE. No.

17 THE CLERK. Mr. Markey?

18 SENATOR MARKEY. No.

1 THE CLERK. Senator Merkley?

2 SENATOR MENENDEZ. No, by proxy.

3 THE CLERK. Mr. Booker?

4 SENATOR MENENDEZ. No, by proxy.

5 THE CLERK. Mr. Chairman?

6 THE CHAIRMAN. Aye. Clerk will report.

7 THE CLERK. Mr. Chairman, the ayes are 12, the nays are 9.

8 THE CHAIRMAN. Thank you all. Thank you so much for your cooperation.

9 We may have another meeting next week, and I thank you for all we have been
10 able to do together, especially what we are doing right now on the floor. So
11 thank you very much.

12 That completes the committee's business. I ask unanimous consent that staff be
13 authorized to make technical and conforming changes; without objection, so
14 ordered.

15 The meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:24 a.m., the meeting was adjourned.]