

**Statement of David Schenker**  
**Nominee to be Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs**  
**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**June 14, 2018**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Menendez, Members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee – it is an honor to appear before you this morning as a nominee to become Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs.

I greatly appreciate the members of the committee making time in recent weeks to meet with me and exchange views. If confirmed, it would be my intention to engage in consultation with Congress routinely.

I would like to thank the President of the United States and Secretary of State Pompeo for my nomination. If confirmed, it would be an honor to serve our country at the Department of State.

I am grateful some of my family members could join me this morning.

My children, Ethan and Dylan Schenker, are here. So are my mother and stepfather Linda and Abraham Davis, and my Aunt and Uncle Jane and Ken Friedland. My father and stepmother, Michael and Judy Schenker could not be here today, but are no doubt watching on C-Span.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank my former bosses, mentors, and colleagues, without whose support I would not be here today.

The portfolio of the Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs is expansive. I have, in a sense, been preparing for this job for the past three decades.

My academic background and the entirety of my professional career has been focused on the Middle East. I've spent four years living in the region. In the early 1990s, I worked for a USAID contractor on projects in Egypt and Jordan. For the better part of two decades, I have researched and written about the region as a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a leading non-partisan think-tank. And from 2002-2006, I served as Levant director in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, advising senior policymakers at the Pentagon on Jordanian, Syrian, Lebanese, Israeli, and Palestinian Affairs.

Over these decades, I have had the privilege of knowing and working with many of the outstanding diplomats who have served with such distinction as Assistant Secretary of Near East Affairs. I worked with current acting Assistant Secretary David Satterfield during the Bush Administration. I travelled to Syria in 2004 with then Assistant Secretary William Burns. I know former Assistant Secretary Anne Patterson. This is an illustrious and impressive cohort of diplomats, who handled an incredibly difficult job with commitment and dedication. If confirmed, I would be humbled to be counted among this group.

The responsibilities of the Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs stretch from Morocco to Iran to Yemen. It is an AOR that faces enormous challenges, including failed states, horrific terrorism, acute humanitarian crises, and continuous efforts by the regime in Tehran to destabilize the region. Given our critical alliances, the region's natural resources, its vital sea-lanes, and the enormous potential of its population, it is also a region of great strategic import to the United States.

At the front line confronting these challenges and taking advantage of these opportunities are the highly professional men and women of the US Department of State's Near East Bureau. These Foreign Service Officers and Civil Servants are dedicated and courageous; they make great sacrifices for our country. Over the past two decades—as a scholar at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and as a policy official serving in the Department of Defense—I have worked closely with NEA, and have great respect for both the professionalism and expertise of these career professionals. They work alongside their impressive colleagues from the US military and from other departments, whom I hold in the highest esteem and with whom I would seek to coordinate as closely as possible.

If confirmed, it would be a great privilege to serve alongside these American patriots helping to advance and secure US interests in the Middle East. There is a real need to strengthen alliances with our traditional partners, to defeat ISIS and other terrorist organizations, to confront and roll back destabilizing and pernicious Iranian behavior, and to work to build a more peaceful and secure region.

The US faces a series of complex strategic challenges in the Middle East, which require the application of all tools of American power to mitigate—and now more than ever, especially diplomacy. As we know all too well, what happens in the Middle East doesn't stay in the Middle East. Washington's regional alliances are a force multiplier in safeguarding US interests at home and abroad; they need to be nurtured through diplomatic engagement.

If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this Committee, and with the Congress as a whole, to address these and other national security challenges facing our country.

I am grateful for your consideration of my nomination, and I look forward to your questions.

Thank you.