

# BUSINESS MEETING

*Monday, January 25, 2021*

U.S. Senate,  
Committee on Foreign Relations,  
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 6:04 p.m., in Room SD-106, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. James Risch, chairman of the committee, presiding.

**Present:** Senators Risch [presiding], Johnson, Romney, Barrasso, Portman, Paul, Young, Menendez, Cardin, Shaheen, Murphy, Kaine, Merkley, and Booker.

## OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES RISCH, U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO

**The Chairman:** The Foreign Relations Committee of the United States Senate will come to order. We have a quorum.

And this evening, we meet to consider one item of business. This is a business meeting as opposed to a hearing. And the one item of business that we have is to consider the nomination of Antony Blinken to be Secretary of State, whether the matter should go to the floor or not. So with that, Senator Menendez, do you have anything?

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
**Business Meeting**  
*Monday, January 25, 2021*

**STATEMENT OF HON. BOB MENENDEZ,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY**

**Senator Menendez:** Mr. Chairman, very briefly. First of all, thank you for working with me to put Mr. Blinken in the position to be reported out to the Senate. I hope we will take him up tomorrow. He is highly qualified. He is well prepared to be the next Secretary of State. He is well known to us at the committee. He has previously been confirmed by the Senate to be the Deputy Secretary of State. He served as the staff director of this Committee on Foreign Relations.

I believe he is the right person to repair and restore our alliances, to reinvigorate the relationship between the State Department and Congress. And we heard that in his testimony last week, his willingness to cross both sides of the aisle to engage with members, and to make commitments to continue to be engaged. Throughout almost 5 hours of testimony last week, he displayed both his extensive knowledge and his thoughtfulness. And as I said last week on the floor, the American people expect, and the Constitution requires, that we provide advice and consent to ensure that our top national security officials are confirmed in a timely manner.

The Office of the Secretary of State is one of the most important national security positions of the government. It is fourth in the presidential line of succession. It cannot be left vacant. So I look forward to hopefully getting a positive vote for Mr. Blinken today from both sides.

The world is on fire right now. We have pressing crises in every region and hemisphere, and with the COVID-19 pandemic taking more lives every day. Just last week, we received a word of a horrific massacre in Ethiopia along the Sudanese border, which threatens the stability of Africa's second-most populous country. There will be more calamities like this, more emergencies that call for U.S. leadership, engagement, and response. We cannot allow the State Department to be rudderless because the truth is, without U.S. leadership, China and Russia will act to fill that vacuum.

I ask and urge my colleagues to support the nomination.

**The Chairman:** Do you have a motion, Senator?

**Senator Menendez:** I so move his nomination be reported favorably to the Senate.

**The Chairman:** Is there a second?

**Senator Kaine:** Second.

**The Chairman:** The motion has been made and seconded. Is there further discussion on the motion? Senator Paul?

**Senator Paul:** Mr. Chairman, I will vote against Mr. Blinken to be Secretary of State, primarily because he has been in favor of every military intervention in the Middle East over the last 20 years: the Iraq War, the Libyan war. His complaint about the Syrian war was not that we were involved, but that we did not get enough involved to actually win the war, so he was actually for more involvement to get to regime change. Initially, he was also in favor of the Yemen war as well. It has also come to my attention that during his executive directorship at the University of Penn Biden Center, that the University of Pennsylvania received \$77 million from Chinese donors, including \$22 million from anonymous donors. I think it would be irresponsible to vote for somebody until we knew exactly who those anonymous donors were and how much of that flowed through to the Biden Center at Penn. So I will oppose Mr. Blinken's nomination.

One further reason would be that when he has been asked about an authorization of use of force, he has said, well, yeah, it would be nice if we narrowed the focus, but we really do not need it. So his opinion is the same as

both Republican and Democrat administrations. They do not really need an AUMF to fight war, whether it is Somalia, Libya, Syria. You know, they do not believe they need any further authorization. They can use the 2001. Many on the other side have objected to this, and I think a consistent vote today, if you object to a broad interpretation of an AUMF that means anything, would be to vote against Mr. Blinken's nomination. Thank you.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Paul. Is there further discussion?

**Senator Menendez:** Mr. Chairman, just very briefly. I appreciate Senator Paul's longstanding views on the question of intervention and the use of force by the United States government in different parts of the world. I will not debate that with him. It is a principled view he has. On the second point, though, I want to say for the record, there is no factual basis for the allegations that Chinese money went to the Penn Biden Center. As I understand it, there was no funding from China or Chinese nationals to the Penn Biden Center. In fact, a university spokesman confirmed that the Penn Biden Center did not receive any gifts from China. And so I think that -- I appreciate the gentleman's concerns about use of force. On this issue, I think the facts and the record state quite differently.

**The Chairman:** Is there further debate? Further comments? Further discussion?

[No response.]

**The Chairman:** If not, the question before the committee is shall we send Mr. Blinken's nomination to the floor of the United States Senate with an affirmative recommendation.

The secretary will call the roll.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Rubio?

**The Chairman:** Aye by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Johnson?

**Senator Johnson:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Romney?

**Senator Romney:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Graham?

**The Chairman:** Aye by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Barrasso?

**Senator Barrasso:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Portman?

**The Chairman:** Aye by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Paul?

**Senator Paul:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Young?

**Senator Young:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cruz?

**The Chairman:** No by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Menendez?

**Senator Menendez:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cardin?

**Senator Cardin:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mrs. Shaheen?

**Senator Shaheen:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Coons?

[No response.]

**The Clerk:** Mr. Murphy?

**Senator Murphy:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Kaine?

**Senator Kaine:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Markey?

**Senator Menendez:** Aye by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Merkley?

**Senator Merkley:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Booker?

**Senator Booker:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman?

**The Chairman:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman, the yeas are 15; the nays are three.

**The Chairman:** The motion has passed. The nomination will be referred to the floor of the United States Senate.

Is there any further matter to come before the committee at this time?

[No response.]

**The Chairman:** If not, the committee will stand adjourned.

**[Whereupon, at 6:10 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]**