

U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Sen. Barbara Boxer, Chairwoman of the Subcommittee on International Operations and Organizations,
Human Rights, Democracy, and Global Women's Issues
Opening Statement for
June 3, 2009

FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE NOMINATION HEARING

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) today chaired the Foreign Relations Committee hearing considering President Obama's nominees for two important posts at the Department of State.

Senator Boxer is the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on International Operations and Organizations, Human Rights, Democracy, and Global Women's Issues. The subcommittee is the first of its kind with a specific focus on women's issues.

The following is Senator Boxer's opening statement:

Today, the full Senate Foreign Relations Committee meets to consider two nominees for important posts at the Department of State—Andrew Shapiro to be the Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs and Eric Schwartz to be the Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration.

I am also pleased to welcome Representative Nita Lowey, who has come today to say a few words about Andrew Shapiro, and Senator Jeff Merkley and former Congressman Steven Solarz who have come to introduce Eric Schwartz. Thank you for joining us today.

The first nominee we will consider is Andrew Shapiro, who currently serves as a Senior Advisor to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Prior to this position, he served for eight years as the Senior Defense and Foreign Policy Advisor for then-Senator Clinton.

Mr. Shapiro also served as counsel to the Justice Department's International Competition Policy Advisory Committee, and was an associate at the Washington law firm of Covington & Burling.

Our second nominee—Eric Schwartz—currently serves as the Executive Director of Connect U.S. Fund, an alliance of foundations that support the efforts of non-governmental organizations to promote responsible U.S. global engagement.

Between 2005 and 2007, he served as UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Deputy Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, where he worked with the Special Envoy, former President Bill Clinton, to promote coordination, accountability to donors and beneficiaries, and best practices in the recovery effort.

In 2003 and 2004, he served as the second-ranking official at the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. From 1993 to 2001, Mr. Schwartz served at the National Security Council, ultimately as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Multilateral and Humanitarian Affairs, where he managed Administration responses on a range of peacekeeping, humanitarian and refugee issues.

Thank you both for your service to our country.

I don't need to tell you that both of these positions carry with them significant responsibilities.

With respect to the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration—there are ever-growing numbers of displaced persons in the world today. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there were roughly 11.4 million refugees in the world at the end of 2007, and an additional 26 million internally displaced persons, or IDPs.

While the United States cannot single-handedly help every one of them, we need to ensure that the resources we expend helping refugees and IDPs are used wisely.

In a hearing I recently held with Senator Feingold on violence against women in Darfur and Sudan, we heard horrifying stories of women being attacked in camps, raped, and brutalized. We also heard stories about the lack of basic resources such as firewood and water. The U.S. must make this a priority and take concrete action so that we can better protect these women.

We also continue to face challenges related to maternal health and family planning. According to the United Nations Population Fund, there are at least 200 million women in the world today who would either delay or prevent pregnancy if they had access to contraceptives.

An additional 500,000 women die each year during childbirth. In some countries, the figure is shockingly high. In Sierra Leone, one in eight women die in childbirth. And in Afghanistan, a woman dies in giving birth roughly every 28 minutes of each and every day.

The Bureau of Political-Military Affairs must deal with significant threats from arms trafficking and the proliferation of sensitive technologies. I have been particularly concerned about shoulder-fired missiles and the threat they pose to both military and civilian interests around the globe.

The Bureau is also responsible for training and equipping foreign military forces in dozens of countries. I cannot stress the importance of ensuring that this funding is always accounted for and is always in line with American values and security interests.

So with that said, I will now turn to Senator Wicker for any comments he may have. When he is done, we will turn to Senator Merkley who is going to briefly introduce Eric Schwartz. We will then turn to Congresswoman Lowey for an introduction of Andrew Shapiro, and then we will turn to Rep. Solarz for some final comments about Mr. Schwartz.

###