

BUSINESS MEETING

Wednesday, November 20, 2019

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
WASHINGTON, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:06 p.m., in Room S-116, The Capitol,
Hon. James Risch, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Risch [presiding], Gardner, Romney, Isakson, Barrasso,
Portman, Paul, Young, Cruz, Menendez, Cardin, Coons, Murphy, Kaine, and Merkley.

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

THE CHAIRMAN. The business meeting of the Senate Foreign Relations

Committee will come to order.

First of all, thanks to everybody for the way we handled the Hong Kong resolution yesterday. I think everybody can be proud of the work that was done on that. I thank the committee on both sides, including Democrats, my Democratic colleagues, especially the ranking member, for getting this done. I think it was a good day for all of us, so thanks a lot.

We have another issue that is biting us very quickly, and that is the South Korea/Japan issue, which I think almost everyone here is familiar with. The ranking

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Business Meeting

November 20, 2019

member and I have been working on a resolution. I am told we are either there or very close, but we will probably have that hammered out this afternoon. So this is something that needs real attention. The drop-dead date is 10:00 a.m. on Friday morning. This thing has not gotten any attention or very little attention from the national and international media. So I would urge everyone to talk about it and to bring it to light.

There are some members that are not members of this committee that are doing letters to heads of both states saying that you ought to get together and resolve this. Well, that is a good proposition, but it also equalizes the two positions, and I -- from my own standpoint, I do not think the two positions are equalized. I think that one side has more to do than the other side. So in any event, when you see that resolution, I hope everyone will get on board and talk it up.

On the agenda today are two -- and this meeting should go quickly -- foreign service officer lists and 16 nominees. I have been asked to hold the nom for the Honorable Sung Kim to be ambassador to Indonesia. This nomination will be considered in a future business meeting. These are important nominations. I appreciate everyone's attendance so we can process these individuals and play our part in ensuring diplomatic posts overseas are filled.

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Business Meeting

November 20, 2019

I will now turn it over to Senator Menendez.

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

SENATOR MENENDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are 16 nominees and one foreign service promotion list on the agenda today. I am going to speak only on the nomination of Mr. Sullivan, and I will be supporting all other nominees on the agenda today.

I appreciate that Mr. Sullivan has been one of the senior political appointees in the Department who has been willing to engage Congress, and I wish more Trump appointees would follow his lead. Nevertheless, as I made clear during his nomination hearing, I am deeply disappointed by his hear no evil/see no evil approach in response to the character assassination of Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch. She is an exemplary public servant whom Mr. Sullivan himself said represented our country capably and admirably.

Yet while false accusations were being leveled against her, Mr. Sullivan did not advocate for a statement of support from the State Department. So I sincerely hope that if confirmed, Mr. Sullivan will not permit the dedicated diplomats at Embassy Moscow to be maligned the way he allowed Ambassador Yovanovitch to be. I do not want to send a message, especially as we are now considering another nominee to be the deputy

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Business Meeting

November 20, 2019

secretary of state, that that performance is, one, acceptable, and, two, one which you get a continuing vote of confidence, at least from this member.

Let me just talk about this relationship that he is going to. The U.S.-Russia relationship, I think, remains deeply -- one that I am deeply concerned about by the President's, you know, actions with President Putin, which has led him to take steps that run counter to U.S. interests in our national security, failing to sanction Turkey for the S-400, allowing Russia to become the dominant power in Syria, saying that Russia should join the G-7, and a whole host of other things. So I do appreciate that Ambassador Sullivan consistently said he would be tough on Russia in private meetings at his hearing. He has a lot of work to do on that front. But given his approach to the Yovanovitch issue and other issues of information, I cannot in good conscience support his nomination.

Finally, I know that we have dwelled, over the course of the last couple of years, my concern over the shocking mistreatment of career professionals at the State Department is matched only by my alarm at the total lack of vetting conducted by the Administration for political nominees sent to this committee. Recently, one of those nominees, Mina Chang, has been much discussed around the country. Ms. Chang just resigned from her position as a deputy assistant secretary at the State Department. In

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Business Meeting

November 20, 2019

both the 115th and 116th Congresses, she was nominated to be the USAID assistant administrator for the Asia Bureau, which has an annual budgeting totaling approximately \$1 billion.

I had strong concerns about Ms. Chang's qualifications. Her biography contained a number of embellished claims, such as stating that she was an alum of Harvard Business School when she only attended a 7-week course and had no degree. Worse, there appear to be serious irregularities concerning the actual size and accomplishments of her nonprofit, Linking the World. Following my request for additional information, I received word of Ms. Chang's withdrawal from consideration in September, yet she continued to serve as a deputy assistant secretary until news of her embellished qualifications became public.

In any other Administration, there would be hard questions asked about the spectacular vetting failure of Ms. Chang and other nominees. I am not confident that is the case here. Despite the concerns raised by committee Democrats, Ms. Chang and others were re-nominated at the start of the 116th Congress, even as a number of qualified career State Department candidates had their nominations withdrawn. That should give us a sense of the Administration's priorities and its lack of respect for the working professionals at the State Department.

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Business Meeting

November 20, 2019

It is for that reason that I have been dogged, Mr. Chairman, about this vetting process, which I know sometimes creates discomfort and creates sometimes difficulties for the chair. But on more than one occasion, as we just saw with the withdrawal of the ambassador, the nominee for the Bahamas, there are serious questions here, and that ultimately creates the types of necessity we have in the vetting of these issues.

So I am going to be happy to support everybody else today. Unfortunately, I cannot support Mr. Sullivan.

THE CHAIRMAN. Would you like to have us pull that one and do a roll call vote on it?

SENATOR MENENDEZ. (Off audio.)

THE CHAIRMAN. Okay. That will be fine. Is there a motion -- I am sorry.

SENATOR KAINE. Mr. Chair?

THE CHAIRMAN. Yes?

SENATOR KAINE. If I could briefly, I am going to support all the nominees with the exception of David Fischer and Alma Golden, but I do want to just say something about Mr. Sullivan. I am troubled by the same points that Senator Menendez raises. I resolved it a little bit differently, and I just wanted to put on the record why I am supporting him.

Senator Menendez asked John Sullivan a very important question that was bluntly phrased, and he got a very blunt response. Senator Menendez said, "Do you think it is ever appropriate for the President to use his office to solicit investigations into a domestic political opponent?" We have been in a number of hearings where similar questions have been asked, and we have had witness give very equivocal and very hedgy answers. And John Sullivan did not give an equivocal or hedgy answer. His answer was blunt. "Soliciting investigations into a domestic political opponent? I do not think that would be in accord with our values."

I wish everybody who was coming before the committee would answer a question like that and answer it in the way he did. And while I am concerned that he did not vigorously advocate for Ambassador Yovanovitch, he did tell her you have done nothing wrong. And she testified to that, and we asked him about it. He said, yes, that is exactly what I told her because she did not do anything wrong, and she is a very, very qualified individual who has served the country well.

So I also would have wished he would have been more forward leaning in protecting somebody that it is his job to protect as the key person at the State Department. So I reflect my colleague's concern. But I think his unequivocal recognition of what behaviors are on the right side of the legal and ethical line and what

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Business Meeting

November 20, 2019

behaviors are on the wrong side of the legal and ethical line that convinced me to support him.

THE CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Would you be satisfied with just being recorded as no, or do you want --

SENATOR Kaine. Yes, I can just be recorded no.

THE CHAIRMAN. How about Sullivan?

SENATOR MENENDEZ. I can just be recorded as no.

THE CHAIRMAN. As a no? Okay. Any other comments? Senator --

SENATOR COONS. I will associate myself with the comments of the senator from Virginia and his intentions.

THE CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Senator?

SENATOR PAUL. No on Degnan.

THE CHAIRMAN. Okay. We will get to that when we are done. We will do the voting --

SENATOR CARDIN. I will record when we do the vote.

THE CHAIRMAN. I am sorry?

SENATOR CARDIN. I want to be recorded no on Golden.

THE CHAIRMAN. Right, we will do that when we are done. So I would accept a motion to approve two foreign service officer lists, plus the 16 that we have identified that are up in front of us today, and that does not include the gentleman we took off, right, Kim for Indonesia. So I would -- I would accept that motion at the end, anybody who wants to be recorded as no.

SENATOR YOUNG. So moved.

THE CHAIRMAN. It has been moved. Is there a second?

SENATOR ROMNEY. Second.

SENATOR MENENDEZ. Second.

THE CHAIRMAN. Is there any further debate?

[No response.]

THE CHAIRMAN. There being no further debate, all those in favor, signify by saying aye.

[A chorus of ayes.]

THE CHAIRMAN. Opposed, nay?

[No response.]

THE CHAIRMAN. The ayes have it. The list will be -- will be approved, and we will now take those who want to be recorded as no. Senator Menendez on Sullivan is a no?

SENATOR MENENDEZ. No, on Sullivan.

THE CHAIRMAN. Senator?

SENATOR CARDIN. No on Dr. Golden.

THE CHAIRMAN. No on Dr. Golden for Senator Cardin. Senator Coons?

SENATOR COONS. No on Fischer and Golden.

THE CHAIRMAN. No on Fischer and Golden for Coons. Senator Kaine?

SENATOR KAINE. No on Fischer and Golden.

THE CHAIRMAN. Senator Merkley?

SENATOR MERKLEY. Same on both Fischer and Golden.

THE CHAIRMAN. Okay. Any other -- Senator Paul?

SENATOR PAUL. No on Degnan.

THE CHAIRMAN. No on Degnan. Any others?

[No response.]

THE CHAIRMAN. If not, thank you all for being so prompt and getting this done.

This completes the committee's business.

11

I ask unanimous consent that staff be authorized to make technical and conforming changes.

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The committee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 2:16 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]