NOMINEES

HON. NORMAN L. EISEN, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE CZECH REPUBLIC

HON. FRANCIS JOSEPH RICCIARDONE, JR., OF MASSACHUSETTS, TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

ROBERT S. FORD, OF VERMONT, TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC
NOMINATIONS
[Eisen, Ricciardone, Ford]

Tuesday, August 2, 2011

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:30 p.m. in Room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Jeanne Shaheen presiding.

PRESENT. Senator Shaheen [presiding], Menendez, Casey, Coons, and Lugar.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JEANNE SHAHEEN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE

SENATOR SHAHEEN. This hearing will come to order. Good afternoon, everyone.

Today we have two panels of nominees, but we're doing this a little differently today. So we're actually going to hear from all three nominees in the first panel, and then we'll do questioning of Mr. Ford in the second panel.

We're fortunate to have Senator Lugar here with us, and we want to try and accommodate his schedule, as well as Senator Lieberman's schedule.

So on our first panel we will consider the nominations of Norman Eisen to be Ambassador to the Czech Republic and Francis Ricciardone to be Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey. And on our second panel, we will be considering the nomination of Robert Ford to be Ambassador to Syria.
Senator Casey from Pennsylvania will be here. He chairs the Subcommittee on Near Eastern Affairs, and he will chair Ambassador Ford’s questioning portion of the second panel.

All of the posts being considered today are critical in strengthening U.S. influence in safeguarding American interests around the globe. I look forward to discussing the challenges and opportunities the United States faces in these three important countries.

Now, as I said, we’re doing this a little bit differently today. And one of the differences is that both of our nominees on the first panel were nominated last year to serve in these same positions. I think I chaired one of those nomination hearings last year.

But both nominations were thoroughly considered and approved by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and both were held up on the Senate floor and were not ultimately confirmed by the full Senate.

Seeing the importance of having an Ambassador in these critical countries, the President chose to recess appoint both Ambassador Ricciardone and Ambassador Eisen to their positions. As a result, the two men have been serving as Ambassadors in Prague and Ankara over the course of the last 7 months.
As many of you know, a recess appointment by the President lasts for only 1
calendar year. So these two men have been renominated and the committee will
reconsider their nominations.

As the subcommittee Chair on European Affairs, I was supportive of those
nominations last year, and I intend to support their nominations once again. Since both
men have already been serving in these roles, we’ll have an excellent chance to hear
from them directly about the challenges they’ve already seen and their plans for the
future.

So welcome back to the committee, gentlemen. Thank you both for being willing
to go through the nomination process again and to continue to take on these difficult
responsibilities at a very important time for our country.

So first today, we will consider the U.S. relationship with the Czech Republic. As
an important ally of the United States in Central Europe, the Czech Republic has
demonstrated exceptional leadership in Europe, particularly with respect to engaging
the region’s eastern neighborhood and pressing for further European integration.

The Czech Republic has made some impressive contributions to international
peacekeeping efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kosovo. In addition, the country’s
unique experience with democratic transitions should provide some lessons for the
United States as we navigate the ongoing transitions in the Middle East and North
Africa.
Today we also consider the U.S. relationship with Turkey. Turkey remains a critical NATO ally with a predominantly Muslim population in a volatile and geopolitically strategic region of the world. Recent events throughout the Middle East and North Africa have increased Turkey’s strategic importance as a center of power in this complex region.

There is little doubt that Turkey will continue to play an influential role in many of the national security threats facing the United States. I remain a proponent of a strong bilateral relationship with Turkey and its continued integration into Europe. However, it’s also important to recognize where we have differences.

Turkish troops continue to occupy the Island of Cyprus, and the Turkish Government needs to do more to support a just solution in Cyprus.

In addition, Turkey’s vote against a fourth round of sanctions on Iran in the U.N. Security Council raises concerns that the U.S. and Turkey do not share the same threat assessment with respect to Iran’s nuclear weapons program.

So I want to just briefly introduce our two nominees, and I know that Senator Lieberman is here to provide an introduction for Ambassador Eisen, so I will let him do most of that introduction.

And as I mentioned previously, Senator Casey will be introducing our second panel nominee, Ambassador Ford, when he gets here.
I want to welcome Ambassador Ricciardone, who is a highly distinguished, long-time career Foreign Service Officer. He is the former Ambassador to Egypt, the former Deputy Ambassador to Afghanistan, and he served previously in Turkey and throughout the Middle East. He speaks a number of languages, including Turkish and Arabic. And finally, and most importantly, from my perspective, he is a graduate of Dartmouth College in New Hampshire.

So again, congratulations to all of you on your nominations, and I appreciate your willingness to come before the committee.

As I said, we're fortunate to have Senator Lugar, who is the ranking member of this committee here with us this afternoon, and I know that he would like to make a statement.

Senator Lugar?

STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD G. LUGAR, U.S. SENATOR FROM INDIANA

Senator Lugar. I am very pleased to join you, Madam Chairman, in welcoming our nominees to three very important countries.

And our relationships with these countries are excellent, but we will have an opportunity to review events in each of the three as we welcome Ambassador Ricciardone, Ambassador Eisen, and Ambassador Ford to this committee once again.

Turkey is at the center of several critical issues, underscoring its importance as an ally. In particular, I hope that Ambassador Ricciardone's perspective on the recent
resignations of Turkey’s top military leaders and the effect this will have on political
stability will be a part of our discussion.

Moreover, we will be interested to hear more about the dynamics related to the
upheaval in Syria, Turkey’s expanding participation in regional diplomacy, and its
ongoing role in the creation of a Southern Energy Corridor.

The Czech Republic remains a very important ally of ours in Central Europe. I
will be interested from Ambassador Eisen about ramifications of Prague's recent
announcement it will not participate in the current plan for the European Phased
Adaptive Approach to missile defense.

Regional energy interconnections and diversification in the Czech Republic also
remains fundamental to the United States and European efforts to improve energy
security for the region.

Finally, this hearing is an important opportunity for the committee to review
events in Syria. The Syrian regime appears committed to the use of violence to
suppress the will of its people.

In the last few months alone, more than 1,700 people have been killed with more
than 10,000 imprisoned. The toll on Syrian civilians, including children, gets worse day
by day.

Despite the regime's effort to cut off the Internet, cell phones, other forms of
communication, the images continue to get out, and the world has borne witness to
these brutalities. The causes of peace, stability, and economic advancement would
benefit from a swift transition to new leadership and a more representative government
for all of the Syrian people.

The alternative is almost certainly a cycle of ever-widening violence and the
prospect of sectarian conflict.

The regime, of course, seems intent on playing up prospects of sectarian strife,
has sought the aid of Tehran as a means to hold on to power.

We must explore ways to work with our allies to present a clear and unequivocal
message to President al-Assad and those around him that the violence must stop and
that a credible political transition of reform must begin immediately.

I note the Government of Turkey has taken a strong stance in this regard, given
the potential for increasing refugee flows. Syria’s government and business elite must
understand the current path will only deepen their isolation and intensify consequences
for the regime and its leaders.

I look forward to our discussion with the nominees on these issues and others
that they will bring forward from their vast experience in American diplomacy.

I thank you.

SENATOR SHAHEEN. Thank you very much, Senator Lugar.

And, Senator Lieberman, we're delighted to have you with us to introduce Mr.

Eisen.
STATEMENT OF HON. JOSEPH I. LIEBERMAN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM CONNECTICUT

Senator Lieberman: Thanks very much, Madam Chair and Senator Lugar. It's an honor to be here.

I should express my appreciation to you on behalf of the nominees that you did not join the herd leaving Washington after the vote at noon. And thank you for convening this hearing.

I'm here to introduce Ambassador Eisen. I'd be remiss if I didn't simply say that I have had the opportunity to get to know Ambassador Ricciardone and Ambassador Ford, and these are two extraordinary public servants, great, courageous, informed representatives of the United States in the countries on which they have served and are serving now.

I'm really honored to be here to introduce Norm Eisen. This is not a political duty. It's really a personal pleasure, because Ambassador Eisen and his wife, Lindsay, and his daughter, Tamar, are personal friends of mine and my family. And as you mentioned, I guess the reason I'm asked is that Norman is one of those stateless people who lives in Washington, D.C., so I occasionally do double duty by introducing such people.

As you mentioned, Senator Shaheen, Ambassador Eisen was nominated and given a recess appointment to this point at the end of last year. Prior to his nomination,
he had a distinguished career as a lawyer here in Washington, and then was special
counsel for ethics and governmental reform in the White House.

I regret that it was necessary for the President to make a recess appointment in
this case, but perhaps there is a silver lining here in that we can now judge Ambassador
Eisen based on his performance over the past 6 months. And that, from all that I have
heard, has been really exemplary.

Since arriving in Prague, Ambassador Eisen has been a whirlwind of activity,
winning plaudits from everyone from the Czech Government to the American Chamber
of Commerce, whose leader has said, and I quote, "In your short time in the country,
you have already made a significant impact and you have proven to be one of the most
effective Ambassadors to hold this post."

He has been a tireless advocate for America's national interests in the Czech
Republic, whether with regard to imposing sanctions against Iran or winning contracts
for American companies.

And with your permission, I would like to insert in the record a list of essentially
thank yous and testimonials from American companies who have been doing business
in the Czech Republic.

Senator Shaheen. Without objection.
Senator Lieberman. For more than 2 years before Ambassador Eisen arrived in Prague, the U.S. had no Ambassador in the Czech Republic, which spurred doubts and fears among our Czech allies—and as you said, they have really been great allies—about our commitment to their country. This is not a situation that we, in our national interests, should repeat.

So I hope that we can confirm, give a full confirmation to Ambassador Eisen this time. The Czech Republic has been an extraordinary partner and ally of the U.S., from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to the promotion of democracy worldwide. The Czechs are really now among our best friends and allies in Europe, and they deserve to have an Ambassador from our country that is confirmed by the full Senate.

Finally, as you may know, Norman Eisen has a deep personal connection to the Czech Republic, his mother having been born there. Both and she and his father survived the Holocaust, and it is indeed a profound historical justice, an act of justice, that the Ambassador's residence in Prague, which was originally built by a Jewish family that was forced to flee Prague by the Nazis, who in turn the Nazis took over that house as their headquarters now 70 years later, is occupied by Norman and his family.
And I might, on a point of personal privilege, add that they observe the Sabbath there every Friday night and Saturday. So if you need any evidence that there is a God, I offer that to you.

The story of Norm Eisen and his family and their path back to Europe is a classic American story, a reflection of what our country is about at its very best. And that is also precisely why the Ambassador has proven such an effective representative of our Nation, our interests, and our values; and, again, why I hope the committee can lead the Senate in sending him back to Prague as our Ambassador as quickly as possible.

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

Senator Lugar. Madam Chairman, are there members of the families here?

Senator Lieberman. They are.

Senator Shaheen. Yes, I think we should ask, as you’re giving your testimony, Ambassador Eisen and Ricciardone, that you should feel free to introduce your families and let us welcome them as well.

Senator Lieberman. Thank you, Madam Chair and Senator Lugar.

Senator Shaheen. Thank you, Senator Lieberman. Thank you especially for sharing the last story about the residence for the Ambassador.

As I said, we are going to begin the panel with Ambassadors Ricciardone and Eisen. And we will also be hearing the opening statement from Ambassador Ford, and then we will save his question and answer period for the second panel.
So I will ask you if you could begin, Mr. Eisen? And again, feel free to introduce family or friends who are here with you.

STATEMENT OF HON. NORMAN L. EISEN, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE CZECH REPUBLIC

AMBASSADOR EISEN. Madam Chair, Senator Lugar, Senator Coons, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to be here again in connection with my nomination by President Obama to continue serving as the United States Ambassador to the Czech Republic.

I am honored to have the confidence and the trust of the President, of Secretary Clinton, in representing our country.

Since you asked, I would like to introduce my wife, Lindsay Kaplan, an associate professor of English at Georgetown University, and our daughter, Tamar.

Representing the United States in Prague is a family effort, and I believe that the Czech people have come to appreciate my family as much as I do —well, almost as much as I do.

When I was last before the committee, I reflected upon my extraordinary good fortune as a first-generation American. From the vantage point of our small fast-food restaurant in Los Angeles, where I grew up, my mother, a Czechoslovak Holocaust survivor, and my father, an immigrant from Poland, could never have imagined that their son would someday serve as a United States Ambassador.
As Senator Lieberman noted, and as my mother put it recently, just a little more succinctly, "The Nazis took us away in cattle cars, and now my son has returned representing the mightiest nation on Earth."

As that sentiment suggests, my mission in the Czech Republic is strongly informed by my deep sense of obligation to this country, to the United States.

Since my arrival in Prague in January, I have worked with a talented Embassy team in three principal areas. First, the defense and security relationship between the two countries; second, commercial and economic ties; and third, shared values, particularly the shared values of good governance and of civil rights for all.

In each area, the relationship was good. But we have worked with the Czech Government, with officials across the political spectrum, with Czech civil society, and with the Czech people to make it great.

In the defense and security realm, the Czechs are staunch allies. Over the past year, they increased their contributions in Afghanistan to over 700 soldiers and civilians. Czech personnel operate in some of the most dangerous parts of the country, and they have suffered numerous casualties there.

When I recently visited Afghanistan to thank Czech and U.S. personnel for their service, U.S. soldiers that I met with gave the Czechs high praise. That included General Petraeus, who explained the critically important responsibilities that our Czech
allies are carrying out side-by-side and day-by-day with their U.S. partners in Afghanistan.

The Czechs are also a staunch friend of Israel and a strong supporter of U.S. policy towards Iran. They are one of our very best allies in Europe on those issues and across the board.

In their own neighborhood, the Czech Republic is a leading advocate within the European Union for countries like Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova, through the EU’s Eastern Partnership Initiative. Elsewhere, from Cuba to Burma to Belarus to North Korea, the Czechs are champions of human rights.

We in Embassy Prague are proud to work with our Czech partners on these issues.

Looking ahead to the future of our defense and strategic partnership, we are broadening our security cooperation, developing an approach that goes beyond any single narrow focus to one with multiple areas of specialized cooperation where the Czechs excel. The Czechs are world-class strategic partners in areas ranging from helicopters; to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear mitigation; to PRTs, Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

In the economic and commercial area, Embassy Prague has actively advocated for American business during my tenure. We have an open door for U.S. firms, and I have met with dozens of American companies, from the very largest to the smallest.
When they have concerns in the Czech Republic, we vigorously work to resolve them, engaging all the way up to the highest levels of government, if necessary. I've also encouraged Czech investment in the U.S., travelling with government officials and Czech businesses to scout business opportunities here that will generate good, high-paying jobs in the United States.

In our commercial and economic work, we have particularly emphasized civil nuclear cooperation. The Czechs have six operating nuclear reactors and are planning an expansion worth up to $27.5 billion. It is one of the largest opportunities for U.S. businesses of its kind anywhere in the world.

If Westinghouse, the U.S. competitor, wins that bid, it will mean an estimated 9,000 new, good jobs in the United States, across the United States. To support that bid, we have adopted a whole-of-government approach here in the United States and with Embassy Prague to establish a broad civil nuclear strategic partnership between our two countries -- from fostering new relations between U.S. and Czech R&D facilities, to making regulatory exchanges, to working together to improve nuclear safety, our two nations are building a model civil nuclear relationship for the 21st century.

My third area of emphasis has been the shared values that bind our two countries together. Czech and Slovak national aspirations in the 20th century were first realized by the Pittsburgh and Washington declarations signed right here in the United
States after World War I by President Wilson's great friend and Czechoslovakia’s first president, a revered name in my home growing up, Tomas Masaryk.

The United States helped liberate Czechoslovakia from the Nazis, supported the resistance against communism, and then helped transform the goals of the Velvet Revolution into reality.

I have carried that message of friendship the length and breadth of the country, visiting almost 20 cities and regions outside of Prague in just about 6 months on the job.

My message is one of warm friendship but also candor. I have supported the initiatives of those in the Czech Government, the opposition, NGOs, business, and the Czech public who are working for good government and against corruption. I believe we are building a model in Prague of how to respectfully but forcefully engage on those issues.

We have also worked with the Czech Government to promote equal rights and opportunities for all Czech citizens, irrespective of their origin or faith, including the Roma. My presence in Prague as the child of a Czechoslovak victim of Nazi persecution is by itself a powerful message in the fight against extremism and for human rights. Working with the talented interagency team at Embassy Prague, I have taken every opportunity to engage with the Czech people and their government to advance our common goals and values.

I am so, so honored to be asked to represent our country and our government.
Madam Chair, members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you. I welcome any questions you may have.

... 

Senator Lugar. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

Ambassador Eisen, the Czech Republic was expected to host missile defense radar under the Bush Administration's missile defense plan for Europe, but that plan was scrapped in 2009 in favor of the so-called phased adaptive approach.

Even though Prague recently announced it was not interested in the Administration's current proposal for participation EPAA, it appears open to considering future participation in projects.

What do you see as the lay of the land there? Has the discussion in any way disrupted our relationship? And how would you propose we proceed?

Ambassador Eisen. Thank you, Senator Lugar.

It has not. This has not disrupted the relationship. This has been an active subject of conversation.

And I am pleased to tell you that the Czech Government is strongly supportive of the NATO missile defense plan, the phased adaptive approach as adopted at Lisbon.
You are, of course, quite right that an earlier conversation that we had with the Czech Government about the shared early warning system, which was prior to the adoption of a NATO missile defense strategy at Lisbon, was overtaken by events. The Czechs felt that the limited data that they would receive under the SEW system, the Shared Early Warning, was no longer necessary today because of the broader adoption of the phased adaptive approach.

But part of the result of the good conversations, the good partnership between the Czech Government and United States, including the Unites States Embassy in Prague, has been the strong, strong embrace of the phased adaptive approach as adopted by NATO at Lisbon. So it's full-steam ahead. We're in as good a place as ever on that.

**Senator Lugar.** Let me say, you've noted that a key priority for the United States' policy in the Czech Republic is to enhance regional energy security, including diversification. In your view, what are the most pressing areas for cooperation in this sphere?

**Ambassador Eisen.** There is a critical energy security issue in the Czech Republic. One hundred percent of the Czech Republic's nuclear fuel is supplied by Russia, 70 percent of their oil, 65 percent of their gas. We've made diversification a priority of our engagement.
The greatest single opportunity to achieve energy security is through the expansion of the Czech civil nuclear capacity. They have six outstanding high-functioning nuclear reactors now, and a very strong regulator. Unlike other nations, a very strong national commitment, not just a government commitment, but strong public support, for this critical alternative energy source in the 21st century.

And we’ve really focused there not just on the Westinghouse bid to expand Temelin, which has such a high dollar value, almost $28 billion potentially, and so many U.S. jobs.

But that’s really just one part of this partnership, and we have worked very hard on the whole relationship in Embassy Prague, indeed, throughout the United States Government. One of the first things I did was come back to talk to all of the interlocutors and work on a whole-of-government approach to build a 21st century partnership between our two countries that goes beyond just that bid.

So we’re working on R&D together. We’re working on education, on regulation together in both our countries. And that has been an important part of our work.

I travelled recently with the Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic to Texas to sign an agreement under our Joint Declaration on Civil Nuclear Cooperation, which we have with the Czechs between Texas A&M University, a leading provider of degrees in civil nuclear engineering, and the Czech CENEN, the Civil Nuclear Engineering
Network in the Czech Republic, so our two nations can build in this area in the 21st century.

Senator Lugar. Is there public support in the Czech Republic? That is, ordinary citizens understand the diversification the problem?

Ambassador Eisen. There is, Senator Lugar.

One of the most gratifying moments for me in returning to my mother’s homeland was the rational and the calm approach that the Czech Republic took post-Fukushima to their energy needs, the need for energy security, to diversify energy sources. There is strong national consensus in favor of expanding nuclear, and a strong government consensus.

And some of the risk factors that one sees elsewhere, whether it’s tsunamis or earthquakes, are not present there. So it is a very, very good location for that expansion.

We are very pleased to work, again, not just on that bid, which is certainly important, but on a broad partnership for civil nuclear energy security that is a model of how our two nations can work together.

Senator Shaheen. Thank you, Senator Coons.

I have to go to preside over the Senate in just a few minutes, but I did want to raise one more question for Ambassador Eisen before I go.
Critics of the Obama Administration’s reset policy with Russia have suggested that engagement with Russia would come at the expense of our allies in Central and Eastern Europe. I wonder if you could speak to the Czech Republic’s view of the Administration’s reset efforts with Russia.

AMBASSADOR EISEN. I think that the Czech Republic has come to understand and appreciate the spirit of the reset with Russia and the benefits that that confers, not just for the U.S.-Russian relationship but in the region.

Of course, the President has made Prague a centerpiece of these issues, going to Prague twice, including — I had the privilege to accompany him last year for the signing of the START Treaty with President Medvedev.

I was very pleased. I think it is a token of the — and indeed, more than a token, a recognition of the importance of these issues, that my Czech government colleagues affirmatively embrace the so-called Prague Agenda, and took the bull by the horns and scheduled a conference, an international conference, on the Prague Agenda not long after I arrived in the Czech Republic, to commemorate the one-year anniversary and the two-year anniversary of the President’s speeches there.

We had representatives from Russia, from the United States, and from around the world come, including Dr. Gary Samore from the White House, one of the principal advisers to the President on these matters, to think about what the long-term benefits can be for the region and for the world.
So I think we’ve made good progress. I could give other examples, but I think we’ve made good progress on these grounds. It is important to have an Ambassador there to help convey communications in both directions on this subject and I am very pleased with where we are on the reset now.

**Senator Shaheen.** Thank you very much.

Senator Casey or Senator Coons, do either of you have any other questions for this panel?

I have a few other questions that we will present in writing for each of you and the record will stay open until close of business on Friday for any further questions from members of the committee.

So hearing no further questions, I will thank you both again for your service and your willingness to continue to do this, and hope we can get swift action from the Senate and close this hearing, and turn the gavel over to Senator Casey.

Senator Casey [presiding]: We will start our second panel.