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Pick to be U.N. point man on financial reform seeks to reassure lawmakers

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Jide J. Zeitlin, a former Goldman Sachs executive nominated to be the U.S. point man on financial reform at the United Nations, told a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee Wednesday that financial and legal troubles he faced as a private investor would have no bearing on his ability to impose fiscal discipline at the international organization.

Zeitlin owns a wireless company in India that is being sued for not paying its bills, and a pharmaceutical firm he helped finance went bankrupt.

Senate aides on both sides of the aisle said there were no initial signs that the revelations, first reported in Wednesday's Washington Post, will endanger Zeitlin's confirmation as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations for management and reform. A vote on his confirmation has not been scheduled.

Advertisement During the hearing Wednesday, Zeitlin acknowledged his financial setbacks, saying that "no one bats a thousand." He said he is proud of his record as an investor during a 25-year career in the financial industry, which he said involved hundreds of successful investments and a corporate restructuring effort that reined in costs at Goldman Sachs.

A New Delhi court last month ordered liquidation of Zeitlin's wireless firm, Independent Mobile Infrastructure Ltd. (IMIL), which is being sued for not paying \$2.4 million for supplies, services and interest to a client. Zeitlin's firm is contesting the liquidation and its debt.

"IMIL is financially strong and living up to its commitments," Zeitlin said. He said the dispute will be addressed in an Indian court in March.

He characterized the legal battle between his company and its Indian supplier, Unitech Power Transmission, as a "garden variety" commercial dispute and said that Unitech's lawsuit is "without merit."

Zeitlin, who serves on several corporate, philanthropic and educational foundations, said that if he is confirmed, all of his personal and corporate holdings will be placed in a trust that will be managed by others.

Cogentus Pharmaceuticals, a medical start-up company that received more than \$62 million in financing from Zeitlin and several other investors, filed for bankruptcy in January, wiping out the investment. "I lost my own money," Zeitlin said. "At no time did I recruit other investors."

Zeitlin acknowledged that he once sent a negative magazine article about a rival firm, American Tower, to two of the company's institutional investors and falsified the e-mail address to make it appear that American Tower's chief executive had sent it. The case led to a lawsuit against Zeitlin that was later voluntarily withdrawn without any financial settlement or public admission of wrongdoing. "This was a joke that clearly fell flat," he said, noting that the recipients of the e-mail were longtime friends.

[Sen. Richard G. Lugar](#) (Ind.), the ranking Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, sought assurances from Zeitlin that his legal battle in India and his other financial interests would not undermine his ability to serve effectively at the United Nations.