Chairman BERMAN. The Foreign Affairs Committee will come to

order. I would like first just to reiterate the committee’s policy on

the handling of protests. We have no objection to audience members

wearing tee shirts, hats expressing their views, but to maintain

order in the hearing room, we request that audience members

do not hold up or wave signs, make gestures to attract attention,

stand up and protest, shout or yell one’s views or otherwise disrupt

the hearing.

We will ask the Capitol Police to remove anyone from the room

who violates this policy and it is the policy of the Capitol Police to

arrest anyone ejected from a hearing room.

The chair’s intent is to recognize himself for an opening statement,

the ranking member for an opening statement, the chair of

the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia for an opening

statement, and then given that we have a distinguished but

solitary witness, I am prepared for members who wish to have a

second round of questioning so everyone gets a chance and can use

their first one for their own statement and the second one for the

questions if they want.

I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

If Iran were to acquire nuclear arms, the world would be forever

changed. The most active state sponsor of terrorism could, and possibly

would, wield the most terrifying weapon of all.

Iran’s mere possession of a nuclear capability would be transformative

in the Middle East and beyond. As a member of the nuclear

club, Tehran’s destructive leverage in international diplomacy

would increase immensely, even vis-a`-vis the United States and the

West. Sunni Arab states would be intimidated and more likely to

follow Iran’s lead. Achieving nuclear status would exponentially increase

Iran’s influence and the appeal of fundamentalism throughout

the Islamic world.

Tehran’s terrorist offspring such as Hezbollah and Hamas would

constantly clamor for access to Iran’s nuclear know-how—and can

we comfortably rule out the possibility that they would acquire it,

through direct or indirect means? We can’t even assume that Iranian

nuclear security, even with the best of intentions, would be

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airtight against theft by these groups or their sympathizers in

Iran’s paramilitary services. The international nuclear arms control

regime would be effectively dead, as numerous states in the Middle

East would rush to acquire nuclear arms to counterbalance Iran.

In short, this would be a world in which the United States and its

friends and nations throughout the region would be constantly

under threat of nuclear attack and never at rest.

The deadline for solving this looming problem is fast upon us as

Iran daily inches closer to the point where it can produce enough

weapons-grade uranium to make a nuclear bomb. No one precisely

knows when that will happen, but most experts say it will be soon.

Some predict as early as the end of this year. The National Intelligence

Estimates (NIE) published earlier this year said that it

would be sometime in the 2010–2015 time frame and possibly as

early as the end of next year. When it does happen, a threshold

will have been crossed; once Iran is producing nuclear weaponsgrade

material, the difficulty of keeping it from becoming a nuclear

power will be massively increased.

For one United States ally, Israel, the threat posed by a nuclear

Iran would be existential. To illustrate the immediacy of this point,

we need look no further than today’s news of an Iranian long-range

missile test—a missile capable of carrying a nuclear payload to

Israel. This, coupled with the belligerent talk from Tehran of

‘‘enemy targets’’ being ‘‘under surveillance,’’ could not make it any

clearer that we need to use every diplomatic and economic tool

available to steer Iran away from developing nuclear weapons capability.

There are optimists who believe that if Iran, were it to acquire

nuclear arms, could be deterred just as the Soviets were. But given

the martyrdom mentality of the Iranian leadership, one cannot be

sure. The risks are too great to hope that an Iranian Government

that frequently calls for the end of Israel’s very existence will be

calmed and pacified by a nuclear arsenal.

Stopping Iran’s nuclear quest is our most urgent strategic challenge.

The United States should give this threat the priority it deserves.

We need to impose sanctions on companies that invest in Iran’s

energy sector. We have had a law on the books for a dozen years

that requires such sanctions, but it never has been enforced. Some

of these companies are based in Europe. It is time for our European

allies and their corporations to cease investing in Iran.

Major EU states acknowledge that Iran is trying to acquire nuclear

arms and the EU has begun slowly to ratchet up sanctions,

including, most recently, on Bank Melli, Iran’s leading financial institution.

But it is time for them to take far more significant steps

along lines of cutting off all significant commerce with Iran, as we

did years ago—or at least I thought we did. I’m not so sure after

yesterday’s Associated Press report that United States exports to

Iran have increased nearly twentyfold during the Bush administration

years, up to nearly $150 million in 2007.

Iran should also be at the top of the agenda in our bilateral relationship

with Russia. Some believe Russia’s major foreign policy

priority is to thwart United States policy at every turn. I question

that, and Secretary Burns’ perspective on that issue would be of

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great value. At the least, we should test the proposition through

disciplined prioritization of our goals—followed by hard bargaining—

with Moscow.

Last month our country again joined the ‘‘EU-3’’—Britain, France

and Germany—along with Russia and China, in offering Iran generous

trade and even certain types of assistance. Iran, which

brushed aside a similar offer 2 years ago, responded to the latest

offer just last week. That response has not been made public, but

perhaps Ambassador Burns can enlighten us today about its contents.

Nevertheless, my understanding is that our offer has once

again followed our tradition of making dialogue with Iran conditional

on Iran’s suspension of its uranium enrichment program.

Perhaps Iran is determined to go nuclear, but we need to make

a direct, unconditional effort to engage them and to dissuade them

from that course, as the international community has demanded.

Moreover, I am convinced we won’t be able to rally world opinion

to our side if we don’t make clear our willingness for unconditional

engagement with Iran, and I reject those who believe that talking

is tantamount to surrender.

So we should agree to join the ‘‘EU-3,’’ Russia, and China in an

unconditional dialogue with Iran—or, if our partners prefer, we

should meet with Iran bilaterally—on the understanding that our

partners would fully support crippling sanctions if Iran rejects our

dialogue or ultimately refuses to cease enriching uranium.

Administration policy toward Iran has been a failure, veering

from one approach to another. Iran has made continuous progress

in its nuclear program throughout the Bush years, international

support for sanctions has not gathered much steam, and our allies

still do far less than they should. It is time for us to give the Iran

problem the priority it deserves and the creative policy it requires—

before it is too late.

With that, I yield 7 minutes to the gentlelady from Florida, the

ranking member of the committee, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen.

Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentlelady is expired. The

chairman of the Middle East and South Asia Subcommittee, the

gentleman from New York, Mr. Ackerman, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentleman is expired. I recognize

the ranking member of the Middle East and Southeast Asia

Subcommittee, the gentleman from Indiana, Mr. Pence, for 5 minutes.

Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentleman is expired. I am

now pleased to introduce our distinguished witness. He is a career

member of the Foreign Service since 1982. Ambassador Burns has

served as Ambassador to Jordan and for the past 3 years as Ambassador

to Russia, and by all accounts from a series of disparate

sources, I am told he did an excellent job there. These are people

who don’t agree on anything else.

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During his tenure as Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern

Affairs from 2001–2005, he testified before this committee on

numerous occasions. Educated at LaSalle and Oxford, recipient of

three honorary doctorates and two presidential distinguished service

awards and numerous Department of State awards, Ambassador

Burns was appointed 2 months ago as Under Secretary of

State for Political Affairs, the highest career position in the State

Department. He is a dedicated civil servant and one of our most

talented and able diplomats.

Under Secretary Burns, we are delighted to have you testify before

our committee once again, and look forward to your testimony

and then hours and hours of questioning.

Chairman BERMAN. Thank you, Ambassador Burns, and I yield

myself 5 minutes to begin the questioning.

I would like to ask you a series of questions about Russia, where

you served for the past 3 years. And I will ask the questions and

then you can respond.

First, how would you assess the importance of Russian support

to any international sanctions regime on Iran? How would you

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characterize Russian policy and behavior regarding the effort to

convince Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment program? How

can the United States go about winning Russian support in this effort?

How would the envisioned nuclear cooperation agreement affect

the effort? This is an issue the ranking member raised in her

opening statement. How would that envisioned nuclear cooperation

agreement affect the effort to win Russian support for robust sanctions

on Iran?

Does our initiative to pursue a missile defense system in Eastern

Europe assist or hinder this effort or is it net neutral? Is any

thought being given to suspending development of a missile defense

system in Europe if Russia agrees to support stronger sanctions

against Iran? And while we are discussing the Russian Iranian relations,

what is the status of the Bushehr reactor? The fuel rods

have been supplied. But is it operational? What is the status of reported

Russian sales of S–300s and other sophisticated air defense

systems to Iran?

Chairman BERMAN. Just to interject here, one does have an impression

of Russian efforts to dilute the efficacy of those Security

Council sanctions before they’re adopted.

Chairman BERMAN. I am going to have to interrupt here even

though a couple—particularly the missile defense issue hasn’t been

addressed because my time has expired and I recognize the

gentlelady from Florida, Ms. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen.

Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentleman has expired. The

gentleman from New York is recognized for 5 minutes, Mr. Ackerman.

Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentleman has expired.

The gentleman from Indiana, Mr. Burton.

Chairman BERMAN. I hate to do it, but the 5 minutes have expired,

and so the gentleman from California, Mr. Sherman, is recognized

for 5 minutes.

Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentleman has expired.

The gentleman from California, Mr. Royce, is recognized for 5

minutes.

Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentleman has expired.

The gentlelady from California, Ms. Woolsey, is recognized for 5

minutes.

Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentlelady has expired.

The gentleman from Texas, Mr. Paul, is recognized.

Chairman BERMAN. Would the gentleman yield for just one comment?

Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentleman has expired.

The gentleman from New York is recognized for 5 minutes. Mr.

Crowley.

Chairman BERMAN. Well, if you were going to say that they

haven’t been—that the statement that they haven’t been found to

violate any of the IAEA regulations, and that they, in fact, have

been found to violate their obligations under their safeguard agreements,

you will not be allowed to say that. But the time has expired.

You will have an opportunity. We will give you an opportunity

to respond, but not at this moment.

Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentleman has expired. I am

going to see if I can get unanimous consent to give you 45 seconds

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to respond not on the ideological or philosophical views, but on any

factual error that you have heard and not been able to respond to,

if there is no objection from the committee. And hearing none, Ambassador,

take a few seconds to do that.

Chairman BERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

Chairman BERMAN. There are limitations in this process when

we limit people to—on the one hand when we limit the question

and the answer to 5 minutes, some factual misstatements don’t get

clarified right away. If we have another rule, you don’t get any

other work done for the rest of the day. So we have erred on this

side. I take the gentlelady’s point, and that will be the order.

The gentleman from Indiana is recognized for 5 minutes.

Chairman BERMAN [presiding]. The time of the gentleman has

expired.

The gentleman from California, Mr. Rohrabacher, is recognized

for 5 minutes.

Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentleman has expired.

And the gentlelady from California, Ms. Lee, is recognized for 5

minutes.

Chairman BERMAN. The time——

Chairman BERMAN. Well, I would object to that.

Chairman BERMAN. The committee will come to order. I have to

say that when you decide to yield some time, that that is your time

you are yielding. And so I think we have to go on to the next questioner.

And I will be around for a second round. And people are

leaving, so it may not be that long.

The gentleman from Illinois, Mr. Manzullo, is recognized for 5

minutes.

Chairman BERMAN. 3 minutes and 15 seconds.

Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentleman, Mr. Manzullo,

has expired.

The gentlelady from Texas, Ms. Jackson Lee.

Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentlelady has expired.

Chairman BERMAN. The gentleman from North Carolina, Mr.

Miller, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentleman has expired.

The gentlelady from California, Ambassador Watson, is recognized

for 5 minutes.

Chairman BERMAN. The time unfortunately——

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Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentlelady has expired.

The gentleman from New York, Mr. Engel, for 5 minutes.

Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentleman has expired.

I will yield to myself for 5 minutes for the second and, I think,

last round of questioning.

Ambassador Watson raised the issue of the U.S. interests section.

And I am curious about how receptive Iran is to the idea. And

much of the reporting on the interests section has suggested that

Iran already has an interests section here in Washington that is

similar to the one envisioned by Washington for Tehran. Foreign

Minister Mottaki has said this as well.

Is it accurate to say that the interests section we envision in

Tehran is similar to the one the Iranians already have here? Are

Iranian diplomats running the Iranian interests section here on

Wisconsin Avenue? And, if so, how did this unequal situation come

about in which Iranians run their own interests section here while

United States diplomats are barred from Iran?

I have a couple of other questions as well, but let’s start with

that.

Chairman BERMAN. So they are Iranians, but in many cases either

Iranian-Americans——

Chairman BERMAN [continuing]. Or Iranians under a green card,

authorized to work in the United States.

Chairman BERMAN. All right.

A little more on this issue of the opaque system of governance

in Iran. Is it the State Department’s view that—is there a pro-engagement

camp in Iran and an anti-engagement camp? Is there a

camp that is willing to suspend uranium enrichment for the sake

of engaging the U.S. and freezing the increase in sanctions?

What would be the domestic political implications in Iran of a decision

to engage in dialogue with the United States? And if there

is such a debate, how can we affect that outcome positively? And

who should we be rooting for?

Chairman BERMAN. Speaking of the P5+1 proposal, the State Department

has received a response, I am told. I am curious about

when you might share that response with the Congress and, also,

what can you tell us while we wait to see that response about that

response?

And is it possible, at this point, if you can’t discuss the proposal

publicly at this time, can we get a classified briefing at the earliest

possible time?

Chairman BERMAN. In other words, you don’t feel comfortable responding

publicly or characterizing the response publicly.

Chairman BERMAN. My time has expired.

We will try to work on that classified conversation.

And the gentlelady from Florida, the ranking member.

Chairman BERMAN. The gentleman has 0 seconds to answer that

question, but if the gentlelady hangs around, it will be back to her

very soon, and we can get the answer to that.

The time of the gentlelady has expired.

The gentleman from California is recognized for 5 minutes, Mr.

Sherman.

Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentleman has expired.

The gentleman from Texas, Mr. Paul, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Chairman BERMAN. Will the gentleman suspend for one moment?

Let’s just remember the original, sort of, understandings here.

No disturbances during committee proceedings. And ask everybody

to let the gentleman from Texas’ comments and questions be made

and answered.

I am sorry.

Chairman BERMAN. All right.

The gentlelady from Texas, when her questioning was previously

interrupted, she had asked a series of questions about human

rights issues, her resolution, administration efforts. But it is your

time.

Chairman BERMAN. We are very glad to have you here.

Chairman BERMAN. The time of the gentlelady has expired.

And because Ambassador Burns has an even more onerous obligation

coming up—he has to testify on the Senate side—I am going

to restrict the questioning to the two members who have not yet

had a chance to ask any questions, Mr. Tancredo and Mr. Poe.

Mr. Tancredo, 5 minutes.

Chairman BERMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The gentleman from Texas, Mr. Poe.

Chairman BERMAN. Thank you.

The time of the gentleman has expired. All time has expired.

Thank you very much, Ambassador Burns. As has been mentioned,

we are grateful for your patience and your effort to answer

every question that you are allowed to answer. And thank you for

being here. And I look forward to continuing to talk to you about

what we can do to fashion an effective policy to achieve the goals

that we share.

The hearing is adjourned.