Paul:

Mr. PAUL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

You know, since the 1990s, we have had a bipartisan foreign policy

dealing with the Middle East. And what has essentially been

our goal was to remake the Middle East, and quite frankly, I don’t

think it has gone very well. And I think it has served our interests

badly and actually has motivated countries like Iran to get nuclear

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weapons. And I don’t—I mean, Iran to get a nuclear weapon. I

don’t want them to have a nuclear weapon, but I think our approach

is entirely wrong.

Since the 1990s, and especially in this decade, we have spent

over $1 trillion over in the Middle East using force to impose our

will on that region. It was supposed to help protect our oil. People

are worried about our oil. It used to be, back then, $25 a barrel.

Now it is $125, $130, even up to $140 a barrel. And we never seem

to stop and pause and ask questions. Maybe we are on the wrong

track.

You know, our policy over there now was designed as a consequence,

especially since 911 and Osama bin Laden, yet Osama

bin Laden has written very clearly what he would like do to America.

He would like to spread our military around to weaken us. He

would like to drain us financially. He would like to build up anti-

American sentiment around the world. He would like to divide us

here in this country.

Sixty-eight percent of the American people now want us out of

there. They don’t even want us in that war. And the Iranians are

an enemy of Osama bin Laden. We weaken the Taliban, which was

an enemy of Iran, and we virtually have given southern Iraq to the

Iranians. But we never seem to pause and say, Could we be on the

wrong track in our policy? We march down the same road. The

same rhetoric we hear constantly in the media today is the same

rhetoric we heard in 2002 about our march to war in Iraq, and this

never seems to stop. And for all the reasons we went into Iraq, it

turned out—oh, it didn’t turn out to be true. It was all on false assumptions.

And here we are talking about all these threats and intimidations.

And if you talk about diplomacy, it talks about surrendering.

You know, when we had the missile crisis in 1962, Kennedy went

to Khrushchev and he talked to him. And he didn’t have—he didn’t

say, On condition you get the weapons out of Cuba. No. If he would

have said that, there would have been no discussion, and we

wouldn’t have taken the missiles out of Turkey, and we wouldn’t

have had a resolution of that. But today we say, ‘‘Yes, we will talk

to the Iranians on the conditions that they stop doing what is legal

under the NPT.’’ They are legally allowed to enrich uranium. And

yet we say, ‘‘We will only talk to you under these particular conditions.’’

We need to put what we are talking about with Iran into certain

perspective. They do have a right to enrich, which has never been

mentioned in the media. There has never been proof they have violated

any IAEA resolutions; have not found to be in violation. In

the last year there were nine unannounced examinations in Iran,

and they were not found in violation. And there is no evidence, according

to our CIA, they have been actually working on a weapon.

Does this mean they might not want to? No, it doesn’t mean that.

It just means there is no evidence. And here we are so determined,

it almost looks like we are obsessed with this, that we are willing

to risk World War III in order to prove that maybe someday the

Iranians might want or seek a missile.

They are surrounded by nuclear missiles and weapons. The

United States is there, Israel is there, the Soviets are there, the

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Pakistanis are there, the Chinese are there, and the Indians are

there. They haven’t invaded a neighboring country, and yet their

thought means we have to close them down.

Mr. PAUL. Not at this point.

This means that we are marching onto the next venture, which

we can’t afford, which is foolhardy, doesn’t make any sense, no

more sense than the invasion of Iraq. And we are suffering the consequences.

We need to take a breath and say, you know, why can’t we talk

to somebody who doesn’t even have any? Recently there was a dissertation

that said the reason we must attack them now is because

they are so weak. Is that the reason we as Americans must attack

a nation is because they are weak? We should not be the aggressors.

We should not be the country that starts wars.

Mr. PAUL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My first question, Mr. Ambassador, I hope is a short answer. Did

I understand you correctly that we do not have any hard evidence

that the Iranians are enriching to weapons-grade?

Mr. PAUL. Well, that would mean it would have to be weaponsgrade

then, because there is a lot of enrichment for peaceful purposes.

So I think you answered the question.

Mr. PAUL. Okay. And, yet, up until now, they have not been

found in violation of the NPT.

But let me go on to the next question, and this has to do with

our reaction to a theoretical situation. What would we do if a powerful

foreign government announced that it was prohibiting the exportation

and importation of petroleum products and, at the same

time, imposed stringent inspections on all U.S. citizens going and

coming from the country, all vehicles, all ships, all planes, all

trains, and all cargoes?

I know how the American people would respond, but how—could

you give me an opinion about how we in this country should respond

to a powerful country doing that to us?

Mr. PAUL. But you don’t want to say how we should respond.

Mr. PAUL. Let me follow up on that question. What I just described,

how is that different than a blockade? If somebody came

in and did this to us and said that we were going to prohibit the

exportation and importation of petroleum products and not allow

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people to go back and forth, vehicles, ships, planes, trains and cargoes,

how does that differ from a blockade?

Mr. PAUL. What I am trying to get is a definition of a blockade.

I am describing a set of circumstances which is the same set of circumstances

that we are proposing here in the House to impose on

Iran.

So I want to know how that is different from a blockade. I have

been told here today it is not a blockade. But if people aren’t allowed

to go back and forth, it sounds to me like a blockade, unless

an expert like you can give a better definition of what a blockade

is versus sanctions.

Mr. PAUL. Okay. Because it sounds like the Navy would have to

be involved if petroleum products weren’t allowed to go in and out

and ships and cargo weren’t allowed to go out, it sounds like the

Navy would be involved.

When our Government states that all options are on the table,

does that mean that a nuclear first strike is an option for us as a

country?

Mr. PAUL. But that is very similar to what we were told before

we went into Iraq, that the Iraqis wouldn’t negotiate with us and

yet we were willing.

Mr. PAUL. Well, I see my time has expired, so I am willing to

yield back.