Mr. Pence:

Mr. PENCE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I too want to welcome

our distinguished witness and very much look forward to

your testimony today.

I am just back from Israel, just a few days ago, and I met with

Prime Minister Olmert as well as other political leaders and defense

officials. And despite the rockets being fired from Gaza City

into small hamlets in south Israel, despite the political rise of

Hezbollah in Lebanon, I heard no issue more widely discussed than

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the threat of a nuclear-enabled Iran. And interestingly, I heard no

one advocating war. Rather, in meeting after meeting, one Israeli

official member of the Knesset and thought leaders repeated a desire

that the United States of America and this Congress bring renewed

economic and diplomatic pressure to bear on Iran.

I am disturbed in the context of this hearing today by reports of

the long- and medium-range missile tests being conducted by Iran

today. These actions have to be viewed as provocative.

But they also, along with the discussions I had in Israel, speak

about the urgency of addressing this issue in the Congress. Time

is not on our side. And time is most certainly not on Israel’s side.

What I was able to report, and as Chairman Ackerman just alluded

to, is that this Congress in a bipartisan way is acting to bring that

pressure. While we welcome the recent action by the European

Union, a new round of economic sanctions that I would very much

welcome the Ambassador’s characterization of, Chairman Ackerman

and I have introduced the resolution that he very accurately

described. And let me also say, as a co-author of this resolution, I

want to associate myself entirely with Chairman Ackerman’s rejection

of the absurd suggestion by some that the Ackerman-Pence

resolution is a call for a naval blockade or some justification for

war. It is, in fact, quite the opposite.

The spirit of this resolution, and as Mr. Ackerman just carefully

stated, the precise text of this resolution is to call for people in

your position and the United States of America as a whole, with

our partners in Europe, and I would add most especially, with our

ostensible ally in Russia, to bring greater economic and diplomatic

pressure on Iran with the objective of achieving an end to the nuclear

weapons ambitions of the current Iranian leadership.

And so I want to very much confirm Chairman Ackerman’s sense

of our resolution and urge anyone that has confusion about it, both

in this body and beyond, to take the dramatic action of actually

reading the resolution before they conclude what it says.

That being said, I am pleased to say that the resolution is building

strong bipartisan support, Mr. Ambassador—about 230 co-sponsors

as of this morning—and it very much directs this administration

and your good offices thereby to initiate international efforts

to dramatically increase economic, political, and diplomatic pressure

on Iran.

I am anxious to know your sense of that. I am anxious to know

what you believe would be effective. No one wants to open up another

war in the Middle East or in the Arab world. No one. But

we must defend Israel. We must provide the means necessary for

Israel to defend herself as it is in our ability to do it. And it seems

to me the surest avenue for that is to bring together people of good

will around the globe and say with one voice, Iran may not possess

a usable nuclear weapon. And I yield back.

Mr. PENCE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, Mr. Ambassador, you have addressed a lot of the issues I

raised in my opening statement. I appreciate your testimony today

with regard to the impact of current economic sanctions, the prospect

of more sanctions, and also our, I think your phrase, complex

relationship with Russia. So I wanted to introduce a new thought,

and might just give you an opportunity to answer the question during

my time.

When I was in Israel last week, I had the opportunity to visit

Yad Vashem for the first time. That is the extraordinary new Holocaust

memorial in Jerusalem. My first experience hands on with

such artifacts was in 1977 when, as a teenager, I visited Dachau

in Germany. And so the idea of a Holocaust, the reality that the

Jewish people have faced no less than three attempts in their long

history, three attempts, to exterminate them as a people, I think,

brings into higher belief the call by the President of Iran for Israel

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to be wiped off the map, for calls for death to Israel. It is very

alarming. And the missile test today, obviously, and the reality of

the development of a nuclear weapons program by Iran brings that

into even higher belief as a possibility.

Holocaust against Israel would no longer require the establishment

of obscure camps hidden by woods. It would simply require

one missile, that they already own, being mounted with a usable

nuclear weapon and a short flight time to the air over Tel Aviv or

Jerusalem, and we would have a new Holocaust, all of which you

know.

My question is inasmuch as the United Nations was born as a

forum for the world to come together and prevent genocide from occurring

again, is there a case to be made that the openly—the repeated

statements about the destruction of Israel by the President

of Iran represents a violation of Article 2, section 4 of the U.N.

Charter, of the Genocide Convention, and of the Rome Statute of

the International Criminal Court, Articles 6 and 25, section (3)(e).

Specifically, I would like to ask your thoughts on whether the

United States, as a part of the U.N. Security Council, and the

Council should follow its landmark precedent involving Sudanese

leaders and refer President Ahmadinejad to the International

Criminal Court for indictment for incitement to commit genocide.

And would this be a productive means of—beyond economic sanctions

that we have all consistently called for? My question would

be, would that be a way of bringing greater pressure to bear and

highlight the real threat that that kind of rhetoric represents to

Israel’s security and to global peace?

Mr. PENCE. I would welcome your thoughts on whether or not,

though, that should call for a referral, in effect an indictment, for

incitement to genocide before the—I believe the U.N. Security

Council did make that referral for Sudanese leaders. And I would

love the sense of the Department and your position, the administration’s

position, on whether that kind of a referral is appropriate

in this case.

Mr. PENCE. Thank you.