Ms. Ros-Lehtinen:

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Ambassador

Burns, it is a pleasure to see you again. Let me take this

opportunity to congratulate you on your well-deserved promotion,

and I look forward to working closely with you in your new capacity,

as was the case during your tenure as Assistant Secretary for

Near Eastern Affairs.

Mr. Chairman, as you pointed out, today’s hearing could not be

more timely as this morning’s news reports that Iran fired nine

long- and medium-range missiles today, with one of those estimated

to have the capacity of reaching Israel and United States

bases in the region. The official Iranian news agency quoted the

Air Force commander of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards as saying,

‘‘Our hands are always on the trigger and our missiles are ready

for launch.’’ Statements such as these should come as no surprise,

however.

Almost three decades ago, Iranian radicals took control of that

country and clearly demonstrated the nature of the regime by seizing

the U.S. Embassy and holding 52 American hostages for 444

days. I know that some of these courageous Americans are sitting

in the audience today, and I want to thank them for being here.

And Secretary Burns, they have been able to get some help from

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the State Department, but really not the support that they deserve.

And I ask you to help correct the situation and increase our efforts

in holding the Iranian regime accountable for their ordeal of being

held hostage for 444 days.

Today, the regime in Tehran remains a repressive autocracy committed

to dominating the Persian Gulf and surrounding states

through military coercion and political subversion, to promoting

terrorism worldwide, and to undermining our vital national security

interests. The greatest danger, arguably, is Iran’s long-standing

covert nuclear weapons program. Six years ago, the existence

of this program was revealed to the world, and to great surprise

to the regime in Iran which believed it had successfully hidden its

illicit activities from teams of international inspectors for almost

two decades. According to the IAEA, Iran’s repeated deceptions and

breaches of its international obligations include sophisticated work

on manufacturing nuclear weapons. In fact, it was recently reported

that Iran has continued to make progress on this equipment

whose only real use is for weapons-related purposes.

Among the IAEA’s discoveries were blueprints for constructing a

nuclear warhead that experts believe may have been sold to Iran

in the 1990s by the network of A.Q. Kahn, the father of Pakistan’s

nuclear bomb and the head of a smuggling network that sold nuclear

plans technology and materials to North Korea and Libya,

among others. These revelations give added urgency to two concerns

highlighted by the IAEA in its May 2008 report on the Iranian

nuclear program. The first is that Iran has made significant

progress in constructing and operating the centrifuges needed to

enrich uranium to weapons-grade levels.

The second is Iran’s refusal to cooperate fully with the IAEA inspectors

in answering questions regarding a number of issues, such

as studies on high explosives testing for nuclear warheads and the

development of missiles capable of carrying those warheads. And as

today’s news reports clearly show, Iran already has short- and medium-

range missiles capable of reaching United States forces and

allies in the region, and is also pursuing long-range ballistic missiles

to enable it to reach Europe and possibly the United States.

Notably, Iranian officials were present at the July 2006 North

Korean missile test, which included the firing of two long-range

Taepodong missiles, estimated by United States intelligence agencies

as having a potential range reaching as far as Alaska. Three

U.N. Security Council resolutions have been adopted that require

Iran to suspend enrichment and reprocessing efforts, but require

only minimal sanctions for Iran’s failure to adhere to its nonproliferation

responsibilities. At the same time, the regime’s strategy

of delay manipulation, and selective threats has succeeded in

securing inducements and capitulation from the rest of the world.

Earlier this month, Javier Solana the European Union’s foreign

policy chief, was back in Tehran presenting his latest offer from the

P5+1 group of nations. This most recent offer to Iran includes extended

and expanded cooperation in telecommunications, agriculture

and civil aviation, but also nuclear fuel guarantees and assistance

in building a light water nuclear reactor.

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Yes, we are actually offering Iran nuclear assistance for peaceful

purposes as a means of convincing the Iranian leadership to give

up the nuclear program, which they claim is for peaceful purposes.

This is a conflicted approach and it is reminiscent of another sixnation

process involving another rogue regime of proliferation concern,

North Korea. The Six-Party Talks of North Korea’s nuclear

program recently resulted in the President’s announcement that he

intends to remove North Korea from the list of state sponsors of

terrorism in exchange for a declaration by North Korea that fails

to address the number of plutonium weapons that it has produced,

the assistance provided to Syria and other state sponsors of terrorism,

and North Korea’s uranium enrichment and reprocessing

activities. The similarities are there and they’re frightening. Although

we rightfully focus on Iran’s nuclear program, there are

other threats as well. Among the most important is the Iranian regime’s

status as the world’s leading state sponsor of Islamic militants,

which it uses to undermine governments and countries in

the region and beyond. One need look no further than the 1994

AMIA Jewish Community Center bombing in Buenos Aires, Argentina,

to understand Iran’s reach half a world away.

So, Mr. Chairman, thank you for this hearing, and I hope we get

an opportunity to ask Secretary Burns about the proposed U.S.-

Russian Nuclear Cooperation Agreement that has a lot to do with

its involvement in Iran and the President’s attempt to get a waiver

for that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, and I

am pleased to yield my 5 minutes to my friend from Indiana, Mr.

Burton, and I ask also for him to be recognized for his regular

order at the proper time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Chairman, if I could just ask a question.

I would prefer if we do stick to our 5-minute rule and not make

exceptions, because it is really not up to us to judge which question

is more penetrating and worthy of response than others. So folks

know they have 5 minutes, and they can either make a statement

or ask their questions.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. No, I am really sorry, Mr. Chairman, because

if we do it for you, Ms. Lee, can we do it for everyone on our

side as well?

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Nothing to do with you, Ms. Lee. I was objecting

to our side as well. I would be glad to give you 30 seconds

if we could have 30 seconds each for our members.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Which question is more meritorious of time?

It is not up to us.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. It has nothing to do with your question.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Chairman, perhaps if I could ask Mr.

Manzullo if he would like to yield his remaining time to Ms. Lee.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

And following up on this question of the possible opening of a

United States interests section in Iran, how much would the Department

estimate that this would cost? And do you believe that

this would be an appropriate use of American taxpayer dollars, especially

in light of Iran’s history concerning our Embassy, our officials,

or other facilities in Lebanon, and the Khobar Towers in

Saudi Arabia? Do you think that Americans would be safe at a diplomatic

post in Iran under this radical regime?

I think we need to get real about Iran’s past and present activities.

And let me just list a few of them: 1979, the taking of U.S.

Embassy and American hostages in Iran; 1983, Iran was behind

the bombing of the U.S. Embassy and Marine barracks in Lebanon—

how many died?; 1984, Iran was behind the bombing of the

Embassy annex in Lebanon; throughout the 1980s, Iran takes

American hostages in Lebanon; 1996, Iran is behind the bombing

of the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia; 2003 to the present, it supports,

finances and arms militants in Iraq and Afghanistan who

are killing Americans, killing Iraqis, killing Afghans and other individuals

who are supportive of freedom and democracy in these

countries; 2007, Iran arrests and detains American academics in

Iran’s nefarious jails.

Our response? Ping pong, soccer, basketball, and no real sanctions.

I hope that we do wake up.

Just for my remaining time, Mr. Ambassador, in the span of 11

months, between February 2006 and January 2007, at least 13

countries in the Middle East announced new or revived plans to

pursue or explore civilian nuclear energy.

Given the dubious need for nuclear energy in this region that is

full of oil and gas and the inherent risk of proliferating nuclear

weapons, why is the U.S. backing this rapid spread of nuclear technology

and facilities? And would you agree that the most salient

factor behind this sudden development is not shortage of energy

but fear of Iran?

Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, sir.

I have 50 seconds left, if anyone would like it.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I would like to yield to Ms. Jackson Lee.