Ms. Watson:

Ms. WATSON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, Secretary Burns.

I fear that the administration, with the potential concurrence of

Congress, is intent on engaging Iran through force. And we have

seen how intelligence has been misused in the call to war in Iraq.

And I fear that, at this time, we are witnessing the same conflation

of intelligence with respect to Iran. And the reports of hundreds of

millions of United States dollars being spent for covert activities in

Iran are disturbing and problematic.

Now, we have been reading about the testing of the missiles,

but—and you have already said it—I believe that more diplomacy

is necessary, and we have not been as effective as we could be.

So I understand what Secretary Rice said about the possible

opening of a United States interests section in Iran, and I would

like you to comment on that.

She said,

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‘‘The United States has been, for some time, trying to reach out

to the Iranian people in various ways. And we do have the station

in Dubai where they can get visas, but we know that it

is difficult for Iranians sometimes to get to Dubai, and we

want more Iranians visiting the United States. We have determined

to find ways to reach out to the Iranian people.’’

And in response, the Iranian Foreign Minister said that Iran is

open to the idea, saying that contacts between the Iranians and the

American people will be a useful step for better understanding of

the two nations. And I have always believed in the value of citizen

exchange programs.

I understand that most of the population in Iran is under 40

years of age?

Ms. WATSON. They love our movies, they love our sports, they

love our music. And I think, really, the guy on the street and the

gal on the street really loves America and wants to be more like

us.

And I think this interchange with the younger people is probably

one of the best cures for the anti-Americanism that is rampant in

the world today. We just got back from Kazakhstan, and I think

16 of us did a lot to improve our image.

So how many programs currently exist for citizen exchanges between

the United States and Iran? And will the United States seek

to open an interests section in Iran any time in the near future?

Ms. WATSON. I am glad to hear you say that. I think

Ahmadinejad’s image is as the bomb-thrower. We don’t have to

catch them and throw them back. If we fell for his line, we would

be in the Third World War, and it would be the destruction of our

planet. No doubt about that.

So I would hope that you in the State Department, I myself as

an Ambassador, would do all that we can to reach the people in the

streets. Because I think they are going to make a difference.

And the administration has said on numerous occasions that the

Iranian leadership has been involved in the killing of American soldiers

in Iraq by dispatching commando units into Iraq and, indirectly,

materials for roadside bombs and so on. I would hope——

Ms. WATSON. Yes, I will just finish this sentence.

Let that be rhetoric. Let us try for more diplomacy.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.