Well, thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

The fact is Philo Dibble was one of the Department’s true experts

on the Middle East. In fact, the Department lured him out of retirement

to take on the highly sensitive post of deputy assistant

secretary with responsibility for Iran. One of his final achievements

was the successful coordination of the diplomatic effort that led to

the release from Iranian captivity of American hikers Shane Bauer

and Josh Fattal just last month.

He was an exemplary officer, intelligent, honest, direct, and decent

in every way, his passing all too untimely. The turnout at his

memorial service from the secretary on down shows he was both

respected and beloved. He will be missed by those on the Hill who

knew him and worked with him.

His wife, Liz, is principal deputy assistant Secretary of State for

Near Eastern Affairs, a position Philo himself held some years ago.

Together, they have been a remarkable Foreign Service couple, talented,

successful, and fully committed to the service of this Nation.

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So I join you in extending condolences to Liz and the children

and the State Department family.

Well, thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

Thank you for holding this hearing.

I want to go off script for just a moment.

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Nothing we do, nothing any administration has been doing, can

truly be deemed effective with respect to Iran until Iran stops its

nuclear weapons program, ends its support for terrorism, and in

the real, longer-term sense, becomes a government that represents

its people.

But I simply have to say at the beginning, there is no administration

that has spent more time, more focus, and been more effective

in assembling the kind of international coalition to stop Iran

from getting a nuclear weapon than this administration. The fact

that on any given day they do not announce to the world the exact

details of a response to a particularly heinous action is not evidence

that it is business as usual, they don’t care, they are not—

they are not going to do anything. And I do think it is unfair to

leave an impression that this administration is not deeply focused

on the goal that we share.

I mean, yesterday, we disagreed about nothing. The great thing

about this subject matter in this committee is, on this issue, you

and I and I think Democrats and Republicans are of common mind

and deeply committed both to the importance of achieving that goal

and achieving that goal before Iran crosses that very dangerous

threshold.

And I just wanted to make those comments initially and then try

to shorten the rest of my remarks here. Because we are sickened

by what Iran—their twisted and despicable plot to assassinate the

Saudi Ambassador and possibly bomb the Israeli and Saudi Embassies.

And you are right. The involvement of the Quds Force is telling.

This scheme was not hatched by some rogue operator but by a very

elite unit of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, the very essence

of the regime.

Iran and Syria do form the heart of Middle Eastern anti-Americanism

and Middle East terrorism. Syria is Iran’s forward operating

base in the Arab world. Iran is Syria’s major external supporter,

helping the Assad regime murder the Syrian people now

fighting for their freedom.

We share the concerns about both regimes. Broadly speaking, we

have used the same tools to deal with threats coming from Iran

and from Syria, namely sanctions; and those sanctions have been

at least partially successful. They haven’t yet achieved the goal. Financial

sanctions on Iran have complicated Iran’s ability to do business

in the world, including selling its oil, the industry that produces

90 percent of Iran’s revenue. The legislation we authored last

Congress, CISADA, has led to a significant decline in Iran’s ability

to purchase refined petroleum and a near halt in the development

of their oil and gas industries.

Just this week, the International Air Transport Association announced

that Iran’s national airline would no longer be included in

worldwide ticketing networks because of sanctions-related complications.

The message to Iranians is clear. Their government’s illegitimate

nuclear policies are undermining their prosperity and isolating

them from the international community.

Syria’s situation is more desperate than Iran’s and likely to become

even more so when the EU boycott of Syrian oil fully kicks

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in next month. The Syrians claim they have 2 years worth of foreign

currency reserves. Most experts believe they will be out of

cash well before that.

Despite these successes, it is increasingly apparent that current

levels of sanctions aren’t enough to get the job done quickly in

Syria or to get it done at all in Iran.

In Syria, more pressure is needed. Turkey, a major Syrian trading

partner, has significantly modified its decade-old policy of intimacy

with Assad, but it has not yet implemented the sanctions it

has pledged.

Syria’s other major trading partner, Iraq, unfortunately continues

to support the Syrian regime. If Assad is to be removed

soon, as we all desire, we need more pressure from Syria’s neighbors.

As for Iran, although knocked off balance by sanctions, its economy

is far from broken thanks to high global oil prices. The Iranian

nuclear program continues to progress rapidly. The threat has

grown more urgent than ever. The most recent inspection report by

the IAEA shows that Iran’s stockpiles of low enriched uranium continue

to grow. It has been concluded by one respected analysis that

Iran now has almost enough low enriched uranium to produce four

nuclear weapons. If it were to kick out international inspectors and

further refine this material to weapons grade levels, Iran could

then produce its first bomb within 6–12 months and several more

in the year after that. They are installing centrifuges six times as

efficient as the current model in a large enrichment facility in

Natanz. This could reduce Iran’s breakout time to 2–3 months.

There are additional steps that must be taken; and in particular,

our bill, the Iran Threat Reduction Act, will tighten the screws further.

I know we will be marking that bill up soon.

Another is stricter enforcement of current sanctions, and I look

forward to a more vigorous enforcement from an administration

which I know shares our goals.

Two examples: The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps owns a

company that controls virtually every port in Iran, yet I have not

heard that we are sanctioning ships that use that company’s port

services, as CISADA requires. President Ahmadinejad and many

other senior officials who are guilty of the worst human rights

abuses in Iran have not been sanctioned under CISADA. These are

but two of many possible sanctions that could be imposed.

Another important step would be a decision by the Gulf Arab

states, perhaps the states most directly threatened by Iran, as the

plot revealed this week should remind them, to ramp up their oil

exports. That would result in ramping down oil prices and would

significantly diminish Iran’s income.

Can I have unanimous consent for an additional minute?

Our best hope for slowing the Iranian nuclear train

is to bring its financial machinery to a grinding halt, and sanctioning

banks and companies in other countries that do business

with Iran’s central bank would have a uniquely powerful impact on

the Iranian economy. That is why I think the most dramatic measure

we could take in terms of this legislation is designating Iran’s

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central bank as a facilitator of terrorism and the development of

weapons of mass destruction.

Until now, we have sanctioned only Iranian banks that were directly

tied to terrorism or weapons of mass destruction proliferation.

But having peeled away the skin of the onion, it is now clear

that at the core of this banking network sits the central bank, the

ultimate enabler for all Iranian terrorism and WMD proliferation.

For years, there has been speculation about whether a nucleararmed

Iran would actually use the bomb. As the revelation of the

Washington bombing plot underscores, we know that nothing is beyond

the realm of possibility regarding Iran’s willingness to employ

violence in pursuit of its objectives and to do so in the most vicious

and amoral fashion. I cannot conceive of a more irresponsible or

frightening finger on the nuclear button than that of the Iranian

regime.

I appreciate the courtesies you have given me of that additional

time, and I yield back.