The Committee will come to order.

I want to welcome our distinguished witnesses to today’s hearing

on our nation’s policy toward Iraq. Iraq has been a festering foreign

policy problem for our nation for a long time. What most distresses

us is that our nation stopped making headway on the problem

years ago. Now it seems that, pretty much across the board, we are

losing ground to Saddam Hussein.

There have been no international weapons inspections in Iraq for

15 months. There is every reason to believe that Saddam has used

this time to reconstitute his weapons of mass destruction programs.

Three months ago, the U.N. decided to set up a new inspections

program, but we all know that threatened vetoes in the U.N. Security

Council are likely to prevent that new organization from beginning

work in Iraq for many, many months.

Our nation has a policy of containing Saddam militarily. That

policy has cost us some $8 billion since the end of the Gulf War

in 1991.

It cost over $1.2 billion last year alone.

In December 1998, we launched Operation Desert Fox to punish

Saddam for not cooperating with international weapons inspections.

The Administration told us at that time that we had degraded

Saddam’s capabilities and so the operation was declared a

success. Since then, Saddam has routinely challenged our aircraft

patrolling over the no-fly zones, and we have retaliated each time

with air strikes. Again, we are told that this policy is a success because

it is degrading Saddam’s capabilities.

Maybe we are degrading his capabilities, but he does not seem

to mind too much, because he keeps provoking us to degrade him

some more. A year and a half ago, a number of us here in the Congress

decided to help our President end this problem once and for

all by passing the Iraq Liberation Act. That legislation authorized

the President to provide $97 million in U.S. military assistance to

the democratic opposition to Saddam Hussein.

President Clinton welcomed that authority, and in November

1998 he declared he was going to use it to remove Saddam from

power. Since then, there has been precious little follow through on

the President’s commitment. Of the $97 million we authorized in

military assistance to the opposition, the only assistance that has

actually been provided is training for four men in civil affairs.

Of the $18 million we appropriated on three separate occasions

for political assistance to the opposition, not one dime has actually

been provided to the opposition, and less than $4 million has been

expended on their behalf. It is no wonder that our allies in the region,

to say nothing of members of the opposition itself, question

whether the Administration is really serious about its declared policy

of removing Saddam from power. If the Administration is truly

serious about supporting the opposition, there are two things it

should do right away.

First, it should immediately deliver to the opposition the assistance

that currently is being withheld. The funds we have appropriated

for the opposition should immediately be transferred to the

opposition, and the military drawdown authority should be invoked

to begin providing equipment such as radio transmitters, uniforms,

boots, and communications gear.

Second, the Administration should immediately establish a crossborder

humanitarian aid program into Iraq, run by the Iraqi opposition.

Such a program could do a great deal to ameliorate the

plight of the Iraqi people, who continue to suffer under Saddam’s

rule. It also would address the concern that some members have

expressed about the effect of U.N. sanctions on the Iraqi people.

I want to urge the Administration today to take these two steps

in order to demonstrate that it stands by President Clinton’s November

1998 pledge to remove Saddam from power. Before I recognize

our witnesses, I would like to recognize our Ranking Member,

Mr. Gejdenson, for any opening remarks that he may have. Mr.

Gejdenson.

Thank you, Mr. Conyers, for taking the time

to appear before us.

Are there any questions anyone would like to direct to Mr. Conyers?

We appreciate your continued interest in humanitarian efforts,

and particularly in Haiti, as well as this issue. Mr. Berman.

The gentleman’s time has expired. Mr. Sanford.

If there are no further questions of Mr. Conyers,

we want to thank Congressman Conyers for taking the time

and for sharing his thoughts with us.

Thank you. We will now proceed with the

balance of our hearing. Mr. Gejdenson.

Thank you, Mr. Gejdenson.

I will now ask our witnesses to come forward. Mr. Welch, Ms.

Romanowski, Ambassador Jones. Our panel of witnesses today is

headed by C. David Welch, Assistant Secretary of International Organization

Affairs for our Department of State. Mr. Welch has

served in that position since October 1998, after most recently serving

as principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Near

Eastern Affairs. Mr. Welch has had a long career in foreign service

prior to this, serving us in a number of posts overseas in the Middle

East.

We welcome you, Assistant Secretary Welch. You may put your

full statement in the record and abbreviate it, or whatever you

deem appropriate.

Thank you, Mr. Welch.

Thank you very much.

We now introduce Ms. Alina Romanowski, the Deputy Assistant

Secretary of Defense for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs in

the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International

Security Affairs, serving as the principal adviser to the Secretary

of Defense on matters relating to those areas of the world. Her

prior service has been both in Washington and in the field, having

served as country director for Israel after coming to the Department

of Defense from service with the CIA as an intelligence analyst

in the Near East and South Asia region.

We welcome Ms. Romanowski.

I’m pleased to introduce Ambassador Elizabeth Jones, who is a

career member of the senior Foreign Service class of career ministers.

She took over as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the

Department’s Bureau of Near Eastern affairs in October 1998, after

having served as Ambassador to the Republic of Kazakhstan. She

has held many other Washington assignments, and her overseas’

assignments have been concentrated in the Middle East, South

Asia and Germany. We welcome Ambassador Jones for any comments

she would like to make.

Thank you, Secretary Romanowski.

We’ll now turn to questions.

Thank you. Do you have a question you want

to address to our witnesses?

Without objection, the statement will be

placed in the record.

My first question is directed to Secretary

Welch. In the more than three months that have passed since the

approval of our U.N. Security Council Resolution 1284, it has become

obvious that UNMOVIC, the new U.N. weapons inspection

agency, is going to have trouble getting its inspectors back into

Iraq at any time in the near future. In particular, the requirement

for Security Council approval, first of the appointment of the executive

chairman of UNMOVIC, then of the executive chairman’s organizational

plan for UNMOVIC, and then of UNMOVIC’s work program,

sets up repeated confrontations within the Security Council

that are certain to delay the resumption of weapons inspections in

Iraq.

Indeed, some analysts have looked closely at the resolution and

concluded it must have been structured to make certain that Saddam

is not confronted with the request from UNMOVIC to admit

inspectors into Iraq until after our Presidential election next November.

In order to reassure us that this is not true, can you tell

us when you expect UNMOVIC to ask Saddam Hussein to admit

inspectors for the agency?

Can you tell us when you expect the council

to approve the UNMOVIC plan?

What would you estimate to be an outside

date for final approval of UNMOVIC’s organizational plan and

work program?

Conservatively speaking, what are we looking

at by way of a timeframe?

So it could be at least several months, is that

correct?

Ambassador Jones, on March 3rd of this

year, the leadership of the Iraqi National Congress sent a letter to

Secretary Albright, proposing that our Nation establish a cross-border

humanitarian aid program into Iraq that should be run by the

Iraqi National Congress. Such a program would resemble the crossborder

humanitarian aid program that we used to have in Afghanistan,

back when our Nation was helping the Afghans free themselves

from Soviet occupation. In general terms, what is the Administration’s

reaction to that proposal?

Do you expect to have some proposal before

us at some reasonable date?

Ms. Romanowski, are we in fact accomplishing

anything of military significance with our repeated air

strikes in response to the Iraqi threats to our aircraft patrolling the

no-fly zone?

Are we inflicting any substantial damage on

Saddam, particularly if we are dropping bombs filled with cement,

as has been reported in the press? Has this been really an effectual

program?

Seventy Members—and this is for the full

panel, anyone who cares to respond—70 Members of the House recently

sent a letter to the President calling on him to end the economic

embargo in Iraq, but to keep in place the military embargo.

The U.N. Security Council Resolution 1284, which was adopted last

December, eliminates the ceiling on Iraqi oil exports and directs

that future Iraqi imports of a list of humanitarian items, like food,

medicine, and medical supplies, be exempt from U.N. review.

After that resolution is fully implemented, will there still be, in

any meaningful sense, an economic embargo in place against Iraq

with regard to trade in items that are of no military significance?

Mr. Welch, would you care to respond to that?

Thank you, Mr. Delahunt.

The Committee will stand in recess pending the votes on the

Floor. We will continue our discussion as soon as the voting is over

with.

The Committee stands in recess.

Without objection, if that is agreeable, we will

proceed. I would like to welcome our distinguished colleague, the

Honorable John Conyers of Michigan, who has asked to join us

today to make a brief statement. I know of his long abiding interest

with regard to Iraq. Mr. Conyers.