Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I fully

concur with the statements both of you and the ranking member.

The situation we face today is grave. Over the past few years,

Iran’s nuclear program has made significant progress that, if unchecked,

will soon give the mullahs mastery of the nuclear fuel

cycle. Once that happens, Iranian nuclear weapons capability will

only be a matter of choosing by Tehran.

At the same time, Iran is continuing to destabilize the Middle

East through Shia sectarianism, combined with the strategic use of

violent Islamic proxies. These efforts have brought chaos and disaster

to the Palestinians, to Lebanon and to Iraq.

And America, we are badly mired in Iraq and our coalition of the

willing is rapidly dissolving. So many Americans have lost confidence

in the Bush administration that there is now growing pressure

to legislatively fence off any military options concerning Iran.

To those who are horrified by the implication of this development,

I would say that serial incompetence and mendacity comes

with a political price, not just a Presidential medal of freedom.

The world’s response to Iran has been too slow and too soft, and

our misadventure in Iraq has certainly complicated our efforts to

deal with this threat. It does appear, however, almost by process

of elimination that the administration has begun to implement a

new policy toward Iran.

Instead of just blustering about options being on the table, we

now have carrier battle groups in the Persian Gulf. Instead of

merely lecturing other nations, we now have a regular serious dialogue

with the Gulf Plus Two group and are patiently working the

Iran question through the Security Council. Likewise, we have suddenly

taken away the Iranian Revolutionary Guard’s carte blanche

to instigate murder and mayhem in Iraq.

But, there is much more the administration could be doing. The

President has at his disposal imposing indeed a massive set of authorities

made available to him through numerous laws and executive

orders. United States laws have been used occasionally to punish

Iran, but any honest assessment of the past 6 years would conclude

that the large corpus of antiterror and antiproliferation laws

and authorities have never been used aggressively or comprehensively

or effectively either as bargaining chips or as weapons, and

for this failure there is no excuse.

The Iranian threat is as serious as the President has said. If it

is unacceptable, and that word has grave implications, then we

ought to be seeing a much more aggressive use by the administration

of the large and largely ignored set of tools that bipartisan majorities

in Congress have provided to the executive.

Under Chairman Lantos’ leadership Congress is going to keep up

the pressure on the administration to act. We believe a comprehensive

Iran policy requires bigger carrots and bigger sticks. As the

chairman has made clear and as chairman of the subcommittee I

would state that bigger sticks are on the way. The question for the

administration is the same as always: What are they going to do

with them?

I look forward to hearing from our very distinguished witness as

to the answers to those questions.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

There have been numerous press reports based on claims from

officials who were in the administration that the United States received

an offer in mid 2003 from the highest levels of the Iranian

Government to consider comprehensive policy changes on all major

issues of concern to the United States, including the nuclear issue,

support for terrorism and nonrecognition of Israel.

According to the reports, the Bush White House rejected the offer

because key players in the administration preferred to pursue a

policy of regime change with Iran rather than accommodation even

on favorable terms.

First, are you familiar with this offer, which obviously predated

your tenure in your current job? Do you believe that it was an authentic

offer? Do you believe that that was an opportunity for diplomacy?

Did the U.S. make an effort to confirm the seriousness of the

offer?

Was this a major opportunity missed or merely, as some of your

colleagues have suggested, much ado about nothing? Are those not

the opportunities that you are now seeking? Finally, why is the administration

always 180 degrees out of phase with the world?

Let me just ask. I don’t mean to interrupt, but

just as a clarification. Wouldn’t you out of curiosity ask people that

were there at the time while you were over at NATO if this really

was true?

Yes, I know, but like yesterday or last Thursday

or something like that.

So the offer was made and we weren’t sure if it

was legitimate. That is what you said?

But now you are in treaties here where basically

we should be engaged in discussions and negotiations, and indeed

that is what we are doing, but how do we know that these are legitimate?

Why did we allow—2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007—4 years to

pass while a nuclear program proceeded and all sorts of atrocities

and bad words and bad blood and more mistrust and everything

else have gone by?

I mean, when you ask somebody to negotiate, how do you know

they are serious? We should have pursued this 4 years ago. No?

Yes? Maybe?

So if they appear to cave in to your request right

now, and maybe that is a bad term of art. If they willingly agreed

and saw the light about what you are asking them to do right now

at a time when they are about to be sanctioned, why would you believe

them now?

But if they made the offer before we could have

attempted to verify.

Yes, but we could have said in mid 2003, being

that they reached out to us and said they were going to do all these

things. Why couldn’t we say okay, we just want to verify you are

willing to do it. Whatever it is you are willing to do now, why

couldn’t you have done then?

Well, we are glad you are there now, but I think

we blew it or possibly blew it in 2003. We can’t go back and figure

that out now, but I think there is a complete turnaround. I think

it is maybe a good idea, but I think we blew it for 4 years.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.