The committee will come to order.

Before we proceed with this hearing, I would like to say a few

words and invite my friend, Mr. Berman, to do so as well, in noting

the passage of Deputy Assistant Secretary Dibble, who was responsible

for Iran within the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs.

Mr. Dibble was a long-serving member of the Foreign Service,

having arrived in Beirut the day after the 1983 bombing. He subsequently

served in Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Pakistan, and as the deputy

chief of missions in Damascus and was previously principal

deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of International Organizations.

His service to his country over many decades was exemplary

and serves as a model for successive generations of Foreign

Service and civil officers to follow.

I know I speak on behalf of all members of the Foreign Affairs

Committee when I express our deepest condolences and sympathies

to Mr. Dibble’s wife, Liz, and their children. They are in our

thoughts and in our prayers.

And I would like to turn to the ranking member, Mr. Berman for

his statement on this.

I thank the gentleman for his remarks.

I will tell the members and the audience—and thank you to our

friends for joining us this morning—that I will recognize myself

and the ranking member for 7 minutes each for our opening statements

on today’s hearing topic. I will then recognize the chairman

and the ranking member of the Middle East and South Asia Subcommittee

for 3 minutes each for their statements, and I regret

that I don’t think that we will have time to recognize members for

the 1-minute opening statements due to votes that will interrupt

our hearing and we will come back.

We will then hear from our witnesses, and I would ask that you

summarize your prepared statements in 5 minutes each before we

move to the questions and answers with members under the 5-

minute rule.

So, without objection, the witnesses’ prepared statements will be

made a part of the record, and members may have 5 days to insert

questions and statements for the record subject to length limitation

in the rules.

The Chair now recognizes herself for 7 minutes for an opening

statement.

Today’s hearing is part of a broader oversight effort by the committee

to examine U.S. policy options to address the twin threats

presented by Iran and Syria. On October 11, 2011, the United

States approach to the Iranian regime should have undergone a

major change. On that day, it was revealed that the Iranian regime

was actively planning an attack on a foreign diplomat in the

United States and was willing and able to kill and maim innocent

Americans in the process.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton noted in an Associated

Press interview that this plot ‘‘crossed the line that Iran needs

to be held accountable for.’’ Yet it was revealed in yesterday’s New

York Times and reinforced by the testimony of our witnesses before

the Senate banking committee yesterday that the administration

does not plan to alter its course of pressure and persuasive engagement

with the Iranian regime.

Via the failed plot, it became clear for any who still had their

doubts that the Iranian regime would use all available options to

threaten U.S. security, our interests, and our allies. They brought

the battle to our homeland, but our policy response is to essentially

remain the same?

Let me be blunt. This planned murder for hire must serve as a

wake-up call regarding the determination and capability of the Iranian

regime. If the regime feels secure enough in planning a U.S.-

based attack now, imagine how much more blatant its aggression

will be if it had nuclear weapons.

This lesson is not lost on the Syrian regime, whose state-appointed

mouthpiece has warned Western countries against intervention

in Syria, including threats to retaliate with suicide bombings

in their countries. These are not idle threats from Damascus.

One needs only to recall that not too long ago Syria was caught

red-handed pursuing nuclear weapons capabilities; and, most recently, a Syrian spy was arrested after targeting in the United

States American citizens of Syrian-origin opposed to the regime.

So I kindly and respectfully ask Under Secretary Sherman what

action do you intend to take to hold Iran to account, and, in so

doing, send a clear message to the Syrian regime that we will not

tolerate actions that threaten our Nation?

We also cannot rely on the United Nations to provide an adequate

deterrent to Iran. If after a plot to kill Americans and foreign

diplomats in Washington the administration’s response is to return

to the United Nations Security Council and plead with Moscow and

Beijing to permit a resolution slapping Iran’s wrist, then the message

sent to the regime in Tehran will be that there will be no cost

for any outrage that it may commit.

Working with responsible nations, democratic allies to increase

pressure on Iran is one thing. But waiting for the U.N. to do what

is right as the threats from Iran and Syria grow is foolhardy and

dangerous.

Russia and China showed their true colors last week in the Security

Council when they vetoed a resolution rebuking Syria’s Iranbacked

dictatorship for its assaults on its unarmed population.

They will still form an impassable obstacle to effective multilateral

action on Iran.

The draft Syria resolution was reportedly watered down multiple

times and only hinted at the possibility of sanctions, all in an attempt

to placate Moscow. But Russia vetoed it anyway.

Instead of begging for help, we need a realistic policy that reflects

the urgency and the multifaceted nature of the Iranian

threat. We also need a policy that goes beyond merely sanctioning

individuals in the Assad regime to one that provides a comprehensive

strategy toward Syria.

Last year, Congress took a major step forward in the Comprehensive

Iran Sanctions Accountability and Divestment Act of

2010. We are again taking the lead with the Iran Threat Reduction

Act, which I authored along with Ranking Member Berman and

with significant input from Mr. Sherman, Mr. Deutch, and many

other members of our committee. It now enjoys the support of more

than 320 co-sponsors in the House.

I have worked closely with Mr. Engel in authoring the Syria

Freedom Support Act, with Mr. Sherman in authoring the Iran,

North Korea, and Syria Non-Proliferation Reform and Modernization

Act, which, combined, would require additional crippling sanctions

on both the Iranian and Syrian regimes.

For U.S. and global security, these regimes must be made to understand

that the cost of their aggressive actions will be too great

for them to bear and that they must immediately abandon their

nuclear weapons program, their unconventional weapons and ballistic

missile development, and support for violent extremists, and

the repression of their own people. The time is now.

I now turn to my good friend, Mr. Berman, for his opening statement.

Absolutely. Yes, the gentleman is

given the time.

I thank the gentleman. Perhaps if I

didn’t agree with your policy suggestions, I wouldn’t have given you

that extra time. The beginning was a little weak, but the end was

great.

I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the subcommittee chair of the

Middle East and South Asia Subcommittee, Mr. Chabot of Ohio.

Thank you very much to the gentleman

from Ohio.

The ranking member on that subcommittee, Mr. Ackerman, of

New York is recognized for 3 minutes.

Thank you. If someone could grab that

from Mr. Ackerman.

I didn’t mean you, Mr. Mack.

Does the gentleman yield back?

Thank you. Thank you very much.

The Chair is pleased to welcome our witnesses.

Ambassador Wendy Sherman is a good friend of our committee.

Welcome back.

She was sworn in as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs

in September of this year. Prior to this position, Under Secretary

Sherman served as vice chair of the Albright Stonebridge

Group, a global strategy firm and a member of the investment committee

of Albright Capital Management, an affiliated investment

advisory firm focused on emerging markets.

Ambassador Sherman served as Counselor for the State Department

from 1997 to 2001, as well as Special Advisor to President

Clinton and Policy Coordinator on North Korea. From 1993 to

1996, under Secretary of State Warren Christopher, she was Assistant

Secretary for Legislative Affairs.

Our next witness is the Honorable David Cohen, who was confirmed

by the United States Senate to serve as Treasury’s Under

Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence in June of this

year. Prior to his current position, Under Secretary Cohen served

as the Department of Treasury’s Assistant Secretary for Terrorist

Financing.

We welcome you both, and your written statements will be made

a part of the record.

We will begin with you, Ambassador Sherman.

Thank you, Madam Ambassador.

Mr. Secretary.

I thank our witnesses for your statements.

I will recognize myself for a question.

Ambassador Sherman, when asked by the informant if the assassination

of the Saudi Ambassador needed to go forward even if

doing so could cause mass American casualties, the accused perpetrator

responded, ‘‘If hundreds go with them, expletive them.’’

Is engagement with the Iranian regime, bilaterally or through

the P5+1, still a part of the administration’s policy? And does the

administration still adhere to this package of incentives for Iran

based on that regime’s suspension of uranium enrichment? And, if

so, will the administration seek waivers on legislative restrictions

that have been proposed and will be proposed in order for the U.S.

to continue to participate in this incentive package? Is the U.S. position

merely to ask Iran to suspend its nuclear enrichment program

or to verifiably dismantle its nuclear program and stop other

aggressive actions?

And tied to this assassination plot—and I know we won’t have

time to answer them all—the administration sanctioned four individuals,

one who has for years had American blood on his hands.

This Quds Force officer reportedly planned the January, 2007, attack

on U.S. soldiers stationed in Iraq. That attack left five U.S.

soldiers dead and wounded three others. And this same Quds Force

officer coordinated the murder-for-hire plot recently in the U.S.

that was just foiled this week. And this Karbala raid was daring.

It was sophisticated. Iranian-trained terrorists posed as American

soldiers.

Two years later, however, the Obama administration approved

the release of two brothers who were members of the Karbala hit

team and leaders of one of the infamous Iranian-directed special

groups; and the public rationale offered for their release was that

it was part of an Iraqi reconciliation effort.

So why did the administration not designate Shalai—the gentleman

who is no gentleman—the one that was complicit in this

murder-for-hire plot at that time, given that he was the key enabler

of this deadly attack on Americans, and was not designating

Shalai at that time part of the administration’s engagement with

the Iranian regime?

And if I could interrupt, it is always

good when we do it when we have all of these options on the table,

but we don’t do even our own.

So you believe—if I could interrupt,

you believe that engagement with a country whose leaders have reportedly

sanctioned this assassination plot, because money transfers

would have been very difficult in a country like that were it

not approved by higher-ups, that engagement with this country is

possible?

But you will continue?

Thank you. And I am sorry. My time

is up. But we will go to Mr. Berman’s time.

I apologize. I asked a lot of questions. But I just don’t know what

it would take for us to wise up and realize that they are not willing

to negotiate, and they don’t wish to negotiate.

We just had a conversation yesterday

at the U.N.—anyway, thank you so much.

Mr. Berman.

Thank you so much, And the gentleman’s

time has expired.

Mr. Royce, the chairman on the Subcommittee on Terrorism,

Nonproliferation, and Trade.

Thank you, Mr. Royce.

And the committee will recess. We have two quick votes. And

when we come back, we will turn to Mr. Ackerman for his questions.

The committee stands in recess. Thank you.

The committee is once again in order,

and Mr. Ackerman is recognized for 5 minutes of questions.

I am sorry

Thank you so much, Mr. Ackerman;

and Mr. Chabot is recognized for 5 minutes.

Thank you so much.

Mr. Mack is recognized.

Thank you very much, Mr. Mack.

Mr. Deutch, my other Florida colleague, is recognized.

Thank you so much.

Mr. Deutch, another Florida colleague, will be recognized later,

and we also have Mr. Rohrabacher, but now we go to Mr. Turner

of New York.

Thank you very much, Mr. Turner.

Mr. Engel is recognized.

Thank you.

Mr. Poe is recognized.

Thank you so much, Judge Poe.

Mr. Carnahan.

Thank you.

Mr. Rohrabacher is recognized. Thank you, Mr. Rohrabacher.

Mr. Connolly is recognized.

No doubt. Thank you so much.

Mr. Rivera is recognized for 5 minutes.

Thank you, Mr. Rivera. Mr. Sherman

is recognized.

And maybe we will leave that for discussion

after the hearing is over. Mr. Manzullo is recognized.

Thank you. Thank you so much.

Thank you, Mr. Manzullo. Before we adjourn, I neglected to point

out the pictures that we have on the side of the committee room.

And I think that they summarize the clear threat that the Syrian

and the Iranian regimes opposed to U.S. national security, to our

interests, to our allies as well as the threat they pose to their own

people as we can see there. They should serve as a call to action

to compel those regimes now, to end their pursuit of nuclear weapons,

chemical and biological weapons, their advance missile programs,

their state sponsorship of global terrorism and their gross

violations of the basic human rights of its citizens. This means we

need a single focused U.S. approach that identifies these regimes

for what they are and stops legitimizing Iran by holding onto the

hope that its leaders will be seduced into doing the right thing

through engagement or by offering them concessions or incentives.

And the time is now, we all agree, if we are to shut down these

regimes, the time is now.

I thank Ambassador and Mr. Secretary for being here. We look

forward to further discussions on legislation and crippling sanctions.

The meeting is adjourned.