Mr. Chairman, Russia’s retaliatory

war, joined by a motley crew of so-called ‘‘irregulars against Georgia,’’

is a war of intimidation meant to frighten the Georgian people

into giving up the tremendous progress they have made in crafting

a democratic state built on human rights and respect for the rule of law.

The Russian Government is also trying to frighten the Azeris,

Ukrainians, Moldovans, Byelorussians, Lithuanians, Latvians, and

Estonians into resubmitting to some form of Russian vassalage.

Two weeks ago, I spent the better part of 4 days on the ground

in Georgia, in large part, to help secure the freedom of a number

of American children, including two from my own district, who

were behind Russian lines, to get to safety. Thankfully, that has

been achieved.

But I also carried a very strong message of support for Georgia’s

sovereignty and territorial integrity, for Georgia to be granted to

NATO membership as soon as possible, and for an aid package that

Congress and the administration, hopefully, will craft to help the

Georgian people through this time of great suffering and deprivation.

I think many of the facts are on the ground. I do believe there

was a provocation, but that has to be clear for all to see. But the

retaliation, so unbelievably disproportionate, and I met a lot of the

IDPs—they were like scarecrows.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, let me just say, Ambassador Fried, in answer to Mr.

Paul, you know, the fact that the military is bringing in humanitarian

aid, I think, is a great credit to our country and to our men

and women in uniform. I remember I was on the *USS Abraham*

*Lincoln* during the tsunami, and the men and women on that ship

all wanted to be in Ochey delivering those humanitarian supplies.

It was all about helping the people.

Helicopters were called the ‘‘Gray Angels’’ because they were saving

so many lives, and, as the NGOs gear up, as the U.N. humanitarian

efforts gear up, the ICRC and all of the others, and they

have put out several appeals, it is only the military that has the

capability, logistically, organizationally, to step in that breach and

provide life-saving humanitarian aid.

I actually went to one of the IDP camps, and those people looked

like scarecrows. They had not eaten in days. They were being

brought food, meals ready to eat, and while it was only a very brief

stop, it was very clear that without General Miller, who is heading

up that extraordinary effort, and his men and women in uniform,

many people would be sick, perhaps even dying. So I commend the

administration for deploying those ships and that humanitarian effort.

Let me just ask you, the fighting in South Ossetia that, obviously,

was the pretext for the August 8th Russian invasion; what

are we to make of the fact that some 9,000 troops, 350 armored vehicles,

pushed into Abkhazia where fighting had not occurred?

I mean, you can understand that they had enough pretext, for

want of a better word, to go into South Ossetia, but what about

Abkhazia? There, they destroyed NATO-compatible bases that were

made to specs that NATO has prescribed. What do we make about

that? That seems to rip off the facade that somehow this was an

intervention based on a conflict.

I do. Let me ask you, with regard

to Medvedev’s assertions that Russia has ‘‘privileged interests in

Soviet successor states. Putin has warned of dire consequences for

Ukraine, including dismemberment. Ukrainian President

Yushchenko has said that he seeks European integration and

NATO membership.’’ Is this the beginning of some ominous moves

by the Russians?

I would just say, parenthetically, I remember very well when

Lithuania was invaded by the Black Berets. I was actually in

Vilnius with some members of the Helsinki Commission, and Lance

Burgess, literally, was under siege, as you remember it so well, and

parliamentarians from around the world, including Poland but

mostly Europe and the United States, were actually going to his

Parliament to be there, physically there, to try to chill any further

aggression by the Russians.

The same pretext about protecting Russian citizens, and Foreign

Minister Lavrov has said, ‘‘Russia can stand up for its citizens

abroad.’’ That is a very broad statement, it seems to me, when you

realize that the past sometimes is prologue. I am very concerned

about that. How about you?

Finally, just let me say to my good

friend and colleague, Mr. Delahunt, that I have worked with Nino

Burjanadze for years, the former Speaker of the Parliament in

Tbilisi. We have argued, she and I and others, at OSCE parliamentary

assemblies for years about Abkhazia and South Ossetia, especially

with the Russia members of the Duma. It has always been

very intense, but, obviously, it did not lead to violence of any kind

until recently.

While it is nascent, this democracy is real. I believe it is durable,

and the fact that opposition members are asking for an investigation,

I think, is a healthy sign that the democracy has people who

are not just monolithically supporting whatever Saakashvili suggests.

So I think it is a sign of——