Chairman Berman, Ranking Member Ros-Lehtinen,

and members, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the policy

implication of Russia’s attack on Georgia.

The statement I submitted provides detail and background to the

conflict. In my comments now, I want to focus on our strategic response.

While the causes of the conflict between Georgia and its disputed

regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia are complex, essential elements

are clear. After a long series of provocations, Georgian forces

moved into South Ossetia on August 7th. Whatever questions we

may have about this decision, and we do have some, this was no

justification for Russia to cross an international boundary to attack

Georgia.

The United States had urged Georgia and Russia numerous

times, publicly and privately, to exercise restraint and to resolve

their differences peacefully. After fighting broke out on August 7th,

our efforts were focused on halting the violence and bringing about

a cease-fire.

On August 14th, Secretary Rice flew to France to consult with

President Sarkozy, who was representing the European Union in

efforts to negotiate a cease-fire.

The next day, Secretary Rice took the cease-fire agreement to

Georgia to clarify its terms and to obtain President Saakashvili’s

signature. She succeeded.

Unfortunately, Russia has yet to fully honor the terms of that

cease-fire that President Medvedev has also signed. Its forces remain

inside Georgia.

Worse, on August 26th, Russia escalated the conflict when it recognized

the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in defiance

of numerous U.N. Security Council resolutions, which Russia

itself had endorsed.

This irresponsible and destabilizing action has since been condemned

by the European Union, NATO, key allies, and the Foreign

Ministers of the G–7 countries. Only Nicaragua has so far followed

Russia’s lead and recognized these breakaway regimes.

Our response to Russia’s use of force to attempt to change international

borders centers on three key objectives.

First, we need to support Georgia. It is in our interest to help

Georgia recover economically, stabilize and restore its sovereignty

and territorial integrity, and address legitimate military needs. As

an urgent priority, we support President Sarkozy’s ongoing efforts

to convince Russia to honor the cease-fire it has signed. Russian

troops must leave Georgia. Georgian IDPs, displaced persons, must

be allowed to return home.

On September 3rd, Secretary Rice announced a major effort to

help Georgia in its economic reconstruction. Five hundred and seventy

million dollars, the first phase of a $1 billion economic support

package, will be made available by the end of this year, including

emergency support to the Georgian Government. We will work

closely with Congress on details of this assistance and hope there

will be bipartisan backing for this and the second phase of support,

an additional $430 million to be provided in future budgets.

Mr. Chairman, our democracy funding for Georgia, which needs

it, is not going to be reduced; it will continue. It is not being subsumed

in this package.

Like any sovereign country, Georgia should have the ability to

defend itself and deter aggression, so we are working with NATO

to address some of Georgia’s military needs. The Department of Defense

has sent an assessment team to Tbilisi to help determine

these needs and, with our allies, develop an appropriate response.

Secondly, we must prevent Russia from drawing a new line

through Europe. Russia should not be allowed to declare that certain

nations belong to Moscow’s ‘‘sphere of influence’’ and, therefore,

cannot join the institutions of Europe and the transatlantic region.

The United States believes neither in empire nor in spheres of

influence. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, we have supported the

right of every country emerging from communism to choose the

path of its own development, including the international institutions

with which it wants to associate. Russia should not be able

to veto the right of sovereign countries to choose their future. This

was one of Vice President Cheney’s messages when he visited Georgia,

Azerbaijan, and Ukraine last week.

It is that freedom of choice that ‘‘Europe, whole, free, and at

peace,’’ really means. ‘‘Europe, whole, free, and at peace’’ is in

America’s interest because the alternative is a divided, unstable

continent.

This vision is not against Russia. On the contrary, we believe

that this vision should include Russia, but Russia’s own actions at

home and abroad have been increasingly inconsistent with the common

values that constitute the foundation of the Euro-Atlantic

community.

Russia’s current aggression against Georgia shows that Russia is

making a different choice for itself. It is not anti-Russian to ask

that Russia refrain from invading its neighbors in response to problems

inside a country.

Finally, therefore, our strategic response must include longerterm

consequences for our relationship with Russia. Since 1991,

United States policy, under three Presidents, has been based on

the assumption that Russia sought integration with the world and

was, perhaps unevenly, moving toward greater democracy and the

rule of law at home. Indeed, Russia expressed interest in, and

made progress toward, becoming part of key institutions in the

world. But with its invasion of Georgia, Russia has put its own aspirations

at risk.

Russia has a choice: It can seek to be a nation at peace with

itself and its neighbors, a modern, 21st century neighbor that expresses

its power and influence in constructive ways; or it can be

mired in 19th century expansionist ambition, a nation whose

standing in the world is not based on how much respect it can earn

but on how much fear it can invoke in others.

Russia cannot have it both ways. It cannot benefit from the

international institutions it says it wants to join and also invade

its neighbor and use war to seek to change international borders.

We hope that Russia chooses the right path, but, for now, we

must contend with the Russia that exists today. We are guided by

some general principles as we go forward, thinking about Russia.

Russia must understand that the course it has chosen leads to selfisolation.

The United States and Europe must work together to respond

to this challenge from Russia and to help nations on Russia’s

border resist pressure, even as they maintain reforms at home.

We must be steady, determined, and patient in our relations with

Russia. Our response must keep open the possibility that Russia

will reconsider its current course, and we should keep doors open

for cooperation on issues of mutual concern, such as Iran, counterterrorism,

Afghanistan, nonproliferation, and other issues.

We must also be prepared if Russia continues its aggressive

course, particularly against its neighbors who seek closer security

relations with NATO and the United States.

We do not seek, Mr. Chairman, nor are we doomed to have, a

bad relationship with Russia. But until Russia’s leaders change

their path, they and we may be in for a difficult period. As we consider

the implications of Russia’s attack on Georgia, realism requires

us to face what Russia has done and what we must do. We

will support our friends and our principles. Russia aggression cannot

be allowed to succeed.

In time, Russia may realize that aggression against a small

neighbor was a grave mistake. Until that time comes, we need to

maintain a framework for United States-Russia relations, with the

understanding that the perspective of today’s Russian leaders may

not last forever.

We will resist Russian aggression where we must, working with

our friends and allies, but we will also keep open channels of communication

and cooperation with Russia where we can.

History teaches that patience and determination, frustrating perhaps

at first, tend to prevail in the end.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I look forward to taking all of the

questions.

Yes, sir. There is no military assistance in this package.

I am not the best person to talk about the legislative

vehicles for this assistance. I have a pretty good idea of where we

want it to go, but I do not want to get ahead of our legislative experts.

We do want to work with this committee and others on the

details.

Our current package does not include military assistance.

We are going to make a careful assessment of Georgia’s

needs. We are going to think about what the appropriate response

is to those needs, and we will be discussing that on a separate

track.

So that is in an assessment phase.

The Roki Tunnel, yes.

It is certainly the case that the Georgians, on August

7th, told us that Russian armored vehicles had gone into the Roki

Tunnel, which is on the border between Russia and Georgia, and

the Georgians told us they feared the Russians were moving in and

were going to assault Georgia.

This is what the Georgians told us. Now, I have to

be very careful because these things do matter. We are still looking

at the precise timeline of when the Russian forces were in the Roki

Tunnel. It is true that the Georgians believe that they were in the

Roki Tunnel when they made their decision to move against

Tskhinvali, and, from what I understand, I think the Georgians believed

they were telling us the truth, but I cannot sit here and tell

you that I know this independently to be true.

Not yet.

Yes, sir, it is. There have been problems with access

into South Ossetia and Tskhinvali. There have been intermittent

problems with access to some of the Georgian villages in the outer

regions of South Ossetia that were out of the fighting and always

under Georgian administration, but the problem in Tskhinvali and

in Abkhazia has been that the OSCE monitors and U.N. monitors

have been effectively kept out, but we hope the situation will

change soon.

I am sorry. I cannot do that. I will refer the question

to my colleague, Bill Burns.

Not necessarily.

Very good, sir.

I believe your interpretation of Foreign Minister

Lavrov’s remarks is essentially correct; that is, he was saying that

you can choose between cooperation with Russia and support for

Georgia.

While there are some who may argue that Georgia, as a small

country, is not worth American support, in fact, I disagree, and the

administration disagrees strongly, on two levels.

First of all, Georgia is a country which has generated pressure

from Russia because it wishes to draw closer to Europe and the

United States. Other countries in the region of the former Soviet

Union are watching carefully to see whether the United States will

support Georgia, whether Georgia’s option of closer relations with

the West is viable, and whether Europe and the United States will

stand by the right of a small country to exercise its freedom of

choice.

I do not believe that it is in America’s interest, the administration

does not believe it is in America’s interest, to consign small

countries to a Russian ‘‘sphere of influence’’ and to signal that

force——

I do owe you an answer on the Iran question, however,

and Russia.

The Russian cooperation on our efforts to deal with Iran’s nuclear

weapons program have been mixed, but Russia has been more

of a partner than not. We had had some concerns initially about

Russia’s support for the Bashkir reactor, but, in time, we have generally

worked these out. We wish to continue cooperation with Russia

as best we can on this issue.

You are right, sir, that Russia’s control over Europe’s

gas and oil, much of Europe’s oil and gas needs, may give Russia

a certain leverage, and we have seen Russia try to exercise this leverage

with Ukraine, with other countries in the region.

The United States has, for several years, made this point to the

Europeans and urged them to take seriously the strategic imperative,

as well as the economic benefit, of diversifying pipelines so

that Central Asian and Caspian gas and oil can flow to Europe

without either Russian or Iranian control.

Of course, all of that gas that flows to Europe, other than

through Russia or Iran, must flow through Azerbaijan and Georgia

and, perhaps someday, Armenia.

Therefore, Georgia’s sovereignty and independence serves our

values, but it also serves our energy policy. So, for both of those

reasons, Georgia is an important country.

Congressman, many of the speakers here today spoke

about the importance of an Article V commitment and the seriousness

of a NATO security commitment to a member state.

NATO membership is not to be given out lightly. Article V is a

critical commitment. It is a commitment to defend a country.

Right now, the United States believes that Georgia and Ukraine

ought to be given access to NATO’s Membership Action Plan. The

Membership Action Plan is not an invitation to join NATO. It is

not a promise of an invitation. It is, however, an opportunity for

these countries to get themselves ready to meet NATO standards.

The administration believes that we ought to move to

give Georgia the opportunity to get itself ready, which is a somewhat

different thing.

Their road to NATO needs to be open, not blocked by

someone else’s veto.

The threat of an attack on Poland, which is a NATO

member, is shocking, and it is deeply irresponsible, especially when

the Russians are perfectly well aware that our missile defense

plans are no threat to Russia whatsoever.

We have to take seriously all of these threats, but we cannot be

paralyzed by fear. Certainly, the Poles have not been paralyzed by

fear, though they were properly outraged by this Russian threat.

Mr. Secretary, you have mentioned this long series of provocations,

and, again, this, to me, is reminiscent of the Gulf of Tonkin

provocations, which did not, in any way, justify what action took

place after that.

Are you saying, however, then, that this long list of provocations

justified the Georgian attack? Everyone agrees that Georgia attacked

and launched their military operations first against Ossetia.

You are saying that the provocations justified that Georgian attack?

No.

I do not know.

I am not confident in very many of the statistics.

That is not NATO’s job, although I disagree with you

about the relationship between Kosovo and South Ossetia.

Our discussions with the Poles about——

Yes, of course.

Right.

The original concept? No, it did not.

Armenia has suffered as a result of this. Our additional

assistance package does not include Armenia, but, of course,

Armenia is a significant recipient of American assistance. I think

it is the second-largest, or perhaps the largest, per-capita recipient

of American assistance in the world, and we intend to continue

strong assistance to Armenia.

In addition, though, we have encouraged, as you know, both Armenia

and its neighbors, Turkey and Azerbaijan, to work toward

settling their differences. We were delighted that the President of

Armenia reached out to President Gul and invited him to Yerevan

and delighted also that President Gul accepted the invitation.

It is, obviously, more than that.

A factor of 10 sounds about right, but I do not want

to be too precise. Of course, I would have to look at what lies behind

those large estimates of damage. That seems pretty high, but

I would want to take a look at this. Certainly, we are working with

the Government of Armenia. I am glad that we have an ambassador

going out there soon, and we certainly hope to see Armenia’s

relative isolation end. We want its borders open and its relations

improved, and we are going to work to that end.

Ultimately, that is a question you should put to the

Georgians, but I will say this——

Loudly, unequivocally, and repeatedly.

Georgia did not deserve to be invaded by a larger

country, and whatever Georgia’s decision to act within its own borders,

that did not justify a Russian invasion, first.

Secondly, it is not in our interests that a country, even if it has

done something we consider foolish in this case, should be crushed.

It would not be in our interests nor would it serve our common val31

ues. We want to see Georgia survive in the face of this pressure.

We think that that is a good investment.

At the moment, we are not considering an invitation

to Georgia to join the alliance. That is not on the agenda.

All NATO countries, including the ones that did not

support an immediate Membership Action Plan for Georgia, did

agree that Georgia’s pathway to NATO should be unencumbered.

That is what the NATO Summit decided in Bucharest. All countries

felt that way.

The question before us, and before NATO, is whether Georgia

should be allowed to make itself ready for NATO membership,

whether we should put Georgia through a program to make it do

the work that it must do to become ready for NATO membership.

NATO enlargement has benefited the United States because it

has helped create a Europe, whole, free, and at peace.

I do not know what General Wald meant. Article V,

though, to get to what I think your point is, must be taken very

seriously and not lightly. We have to take this seriously over time.

We do have the time to think about this, and we want to see these

countries prepare themselves. It will be years before we have this

question before us.

It is true that the Russians said that they wanted to

overthrow the Government of Georgia and replace President

Saakashvili. They said this, so I think your analysis is correct.

If we were to fail to help Georgia, it would signal, not only to the

Georgians but to all of the countries of the South Caucasus and

Ukraine and Central Asia and even some NATO members, such as

the Baltics, that we would not, in fact, stand by small countries

under threat of Russia.

It would damage our credibility and the standing of NATO, as a

whole, not because we have an Article V commitment to Georgia—

we do not—but because small countries that are being threatened

because they want to be close to the United States need to be protected.

That is something that is in our interests, quite apart from

Georgia’s role as an energy corridor, which is an important and

perfectly legitimate national interest.

We do not know yet. We are going to watch this very

closely. Right now, I would put it in the category of symbols and

gestures, but to be watched, not ignored.

The Russians seem to be taking some delight in their own sense

that they are somehow back. Why they are proud of having attacked

a small, weaker nation is another matter. They should not

be, in my view. But this is part of a larger issue of Russia’s sense

of itself and where it is going in the world, and the signs are not

good.

I think the Russians want to be assertive across the

board and everywhere they can. When President Medvedev said

that its actions in Georgia show that Russia is a force to be reckoned

with, it was not a sign of self-confidence, but it seemed a kind

of overcompensation rather than genuine confidence.

NATO needs to consider carefully the consequences of what Russia

has done. We take Article V seriously, and we need, methodically,

to do NATO’s standard work, which is to prepare for all contingencies.

You may be right, which is one of the reasons we

want to help Georgia. It is also true that Europeans themselves are

even more cognizant of the fact that giving Russia energy leverage

over them may not be in their interests, and they are thinking

about energizing, so to speak, their efforts to develop alternative

pipelines that are not under Russia or Iran’s control, and this is

something we very much support. I suspect it will come up in the

NATO parliamentary meeting that Mr. Scott talked about.

We have used military ships to provide assistance

after the tsunami in Asia. We have used military planes to provide

humanitarian assistance, so it is actually fairly standard procedure,

not any kind of provocative act at all, and we did not regard

it as a provocation. Certainly, it is perfectly normal to have relations

with Georgia to deliver humanitarian assistance in a standard

way. It is, after all, the Russians who have crossed an international

border to attack Georgia, not the other way around.

I do not think of it that way, no, sir. Secondly, as a

matter of fact, Georgia did not attack Russia. There is no question

about that. Russia attacked Georgia. Georgia sent its forces into a

part of Georgia, the breakaway province of South Ossetia. Those

are the basic facts.

I do not know about Georgia spending 70 percent of its budget

on the military. That does not sound quite right to me.

And with respect to assistance priorities at home and abroad, sir,

the same could be said for any form of foreign assistance anywhere.

The question is, is it in the American interest to support a small

country, a struggling democracy, that wants to be our friend, that

has helped us out in Iraq, that has been attacked by a much larger

country?

The strategic stakes here are fairly high. The administration believes

it is in our interest to support Georgia, to help it get on its

feet, to prevent Russia from drawing a new line in Europe and

claiming a sphere of influence, and, in the long run, we want to

consider our relations with Russia, not in a harsh or knee-jerk way,

but carefully and thoughtfully.

Yes, I am.

We do not believe that large countries should push

around small ones.

Even when we have such severe differences with the

Cuban regime, as we do, our differences with the Cuban regime are

not rooted in its foreign policy alignment with Russia but fundamentally

rooted in its basic lack of democracy at home. That is

our problem with Cuba.

If Cuba were a democracy, and its people were free

to choose their way forward, then we would have to respect that

choice. The people of Cuba are not, at the moment, free.

Yes, it is.

They sent the forces in.

That is an accurate report, sir.

[Off mike.]

Excuse me. You are quite right. There had been no

fighting in Abkhazia, and the Russians simply instigated a conflict

there. They pushed out of Abkhazia to the Port of Poti, which is

over 200 kilometers away from South Ossetia and, obviously, had

nothing to do with the fighting there. The fact is, the Russians

were not really coming to the aid of the South Ossetians. They

were punishing Georgia, and they were punishing Georgia for what

they considered to be its impertinence in seeking closer relations

with the United States.

Congressman, I appreciate very much your words about the

American military’s relief efforts, and I will pass that along to our

commanders, with your permission, sir.

The administration is troubled by the implications of

what the Russians have laid out as an apparent doctrine. They demand

‘‘privileged’’ relations with some countries. They also claim a

right of special prerogatives with respect to Russian citizens, but

they can create Russian citizens by handing our Russian passports

to non-Russian, former Soviet citizens.

So they handed out passports to the South Ossetians. Then they

said they had to defend them. This is a formula for instability and

conflict, and it is very troubling. You will hear that from many

countries in the region, as you have, sir.

There are very few ethnic Russians. There are a number

of Russian citizens, but there is a small ethnic-Russian community

in Tbilisi. They have been there for quite a long time.

They had been provoked for a long period of time by

a series of political and military steps by the Russians, the Abkhaz,

and the South Ossetians. They believed that the South Ossetians

were attacking Georgian villages. They believed that Russian forces

were amassing on the border.

Quite all right.

I would not put it in terms of ‘‘sphere of influence,’’

but I would say that our policy since 1989 has been to welcome the

new democracies emerging from communism into the institutions of

Europe, as they qualify, yes, sir.

As they qualify.

It was a good speech.

Certainly. NATO is the principal security instrument

of the transatlantic community of democracies. If we did not have

NATO now, we would have to invent it. It is the instrument

through which the democracies pool their military resources, pledge

mutual defense to one another, and deal with current and emerging

threats in the 21st century.

No, but Russia has been invited to work in partnership

with NATO, and, from the beginning of NATO enlargement,

we always thought that it would be good to deepen that partnership

with Russia without limits.

Turkey has been a member of NATO for 56 years.

No. They have been a full member of NATO.

The European Union.

There is no military component. It is for economic

support only.

The missiles there have no warhead. They are purely

defensive in nature. They have no explosive warhead. The Russians

understand this perfectly well. They are of no threat to Russia

whatsoever. We have offered the Russians confidence-building

measures so they can verify that fact.

We decided, from the earliest days of this crisis, that

we would be ill advised to try to turn this into some United States-

Russia confrontation, so we chose to work very closely with Europe

and with President Sarkozy, in particular, as the President of the

European Union for this half year.

So we have backed their efforts, coordinated very closely with

Europe at every step, and we think the results have justified that

early decision. We do not want to make this a U.S. thing, much

less a U.S. unilateral thing. This is a problem that Russia has with

the world.

That means we will not, for example, do this hasty

bureaucratic exercise of throwing together every sanction anybody

has ever thought of, stapling it together, and calling it a policy.

That would be a mistake.

We want to be thoughtful. We want to consider whether Russia

adheres to the cease-fire it has signed, and then we want to consider,

with our European allies, the consequences of Russia’s actions

for our relations and do so in a thoughtful, methodical way.

There are a lot of specifics that we have considered.

President Bush outlined our general approach when he said that

Russia’s efforts to integrate with the world and join key organizations

were now at risk because of what Russia has done. But we

have not been dispositive. We have not rushed out with specific options.

We wanted to see whether we could get Russia to adhere to

the cease-fire and then work with the Europeans on where we are.

We also want to help Georgia stabilize and get back on its feet.

The time is not right, right now, and I think that it

will be some period of time before it comes back. I could not say

what that is.

Not a linkage, in our mind. There are areas of our

relations with Russia that, clearly, we do want to pursue—this is

one of them—and we hope that we are able to. It certainly is in

our interests to do so.

They were not involved in the conflict whatsoever.

I believe that we had, other than the military

attache´s that are a part of our normal Embassy complement, I believe

that there were some trainers in Tbilisi as part of our ongoing

military-to-military cooperation with the Georgians, but they were,

in no way, involved in the fighting. They were not close to it. As

far as I know, they were all in their hotel in Tbilisi.

I do not have the exact number. I can get that for

you.

I certainly will.

I think most of them left. On the other hand, the Department

of Defense is sending an assessment team to Georgia to

consider their military needs, and we are going to do this in a methodical

way. There is no secret about that assessment team.

There are a number of NGOs very active in Georgia.

Some of them support democratic institutions; others are relief.

The assistance that was provided by the *Mount Whitney* and other

U.S. vessels was often in U.S. stocks. We have emergency and disaster

relief stocks.

As for U.S. foreign policy, ma’am, I am at your service to explain

whatever I can in my area of responsibility at any time.

Yes. I am aware that Russia has made all kinds of

allegations. In my experience, Russian allegations with respect to

Georgia tended not to be——

At the moment, as I said, we are going to send an

assessment team to Georgia to evaluate their military requirements,

and we are going to think about what response we should

have. We have not sent military equipment to Georgia recently as

a result of the conflict. We have had a military relationship with

Georgia, which is no secret whatsoever.

Re-arming? Do you mean since the conflict?

Do you mean did we have a military program before

the conflict?

We have not, since the conflict, sent munitions, weapons

to Georgia.

Before the conflict, we had a number of military programs,

including a train-and-equip program, a counterterrorist program.

The Georgians had sent a rather large contingent to Iraq to

serve alongside United States forces, and we did help them, yes.

None of this is a secret. All of this is perfectly—is

public knowledge, and details are certainly available to you, if you

wish, ma’am.

Yes, sir. It would be correct. Yes, ma’am.

A lot of it is reprogrammed from other accounts rather

than new money. Some of it is from the Millennium——

No, no, no, no, from other foreign affairs accounts.

State Department is swallowing quite a bit of this itself.

The administration, and, in fact, the United States,

generally does not support separatism, and we do not believe that

countries should be broken up. Our support for Kosovo independence

followed the breakup of Yugoslavia in a series of civil wars

and a process started with a U.N. Security Council resolution of

finding a definitive solution to Kosovo’s status.

That took years of negotiations. It was carefully worked out with

the Europeans. We sought to have a compromise with the Security

Council, Russia blocked it, and, in the end, the United States and

the major European countries made the decision to recognize

Kosovo’s independence.

Kosovo’s independence and the change in Kosovo’s status were

foreseen in Security Council Resolution 1244 that ended the Kosovo

conflict. That was not an easy decision, but it was the right one.

That does not mean, and we said at the time, that it did not mean

that every separatist group would have a right to split away. We

said that the Russians have used Kosovo, or misused this, as a

precedent.

Yes, the South Ossetians had a referendum, and the Georgians

did not vote. In Abkhazia, in fact, the Abkhaz population was

under 20 percent of Abkhazia before the civil wars of the early

nineties. The Georgian majority was driven out in the conflict forcibly.

As a general rule, yes, sir, we do not.

Yes, sir.

We justified it because of the history of the conflict,

the involvement of the U.N., not because of our own particular interests.

We did regard it as a separate case.

In the case of Kosovo, the fact was that Yugoslavia

fell apart in a series of civil wars, so that country was gone, to

begin with.

Then the Serbs embarked on campaigns of ethnic cleansing and

repression of the Kosovars. After the war, which NATO had to conduct

to stop the Serbian ethnic cleansing, the Security Council

agreed that Kosovo’s status should be resolved through negotiations.

When the U.N. negotiator reported that he had failed in his

negotiations and recommended that we move forward anyway, we

decided to do so.

Each case is unique, but Kosovo is not a precedent, and we have

always said so.

Yes, frequently.

Yes, sir.

In this case, no.

I understand why the Georgian Government made

the decision it made. It felt it was under attack. It had been provoked.

That does not mean the decision was necessarily the right

one. To understand is not to agree with it.

I think that the Georgians are going to have, themselves, a pretty

serious, internal discussion of this. I think, right now, in Georgia,

there is a natural rallying around the President and the government

when they are under such assault. I think that Georgian

democracy, which is a work in progress, is still something that is

real, and I think the Georgian democracy will answer this question.

As I said, we are going to have to look at our relations

with Russia very carefully. What we are not going to do is

react in a kind of spasm of anger and simply trash the relationship.

We are going to look very carefully at our relations with Russia,

especially when we see whether they will adhere to the cease-fire

in Georgia or not, and then we have to draw some conclusions from

their actions of invading a neighbor for the first time since the end

of the Soviet Union.

There are some issues on which we have common interests with

Russia, and we could probably pursue those; other areas where we

have some disagreements, and we are going to be working through

that in weeks to come, on a bipartisan basis, I should add.

Certainly, other people have raised questions about

the Olympics, which are being held very close to where this conflict

has taken place, but, as I said, we want to think through this very

carefully rather than jump to conclusions, and we want to support

Georgia, as a first priority, support the other countries in the region

that are feeling vulnerable, and also then consider the consequences

for ties with Russia, using all of these factors, including

the ones you mentioned, sir.

Former Warsaw Pact countries could not wait to get

into NATO and the European Union. Most of them have succeeded.

They have become prospering democracies, contributors to European

security, and good allies of the United States. The policy of

the three last U.S. Presidents of NATO enlargement and support

for European Union enlargement has been a fabulous success.

Well, I think Russia——

I see the time has expired.

Mr. Chairman, with all respect, I would be well advised

to stay away from that one.

I am certainly available, sir, in any form you find fit.