Chairman Berman, Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen,

thank you for having me here. As my good friend, Mike McFaul

said, this is not a happy occasion. In other circumstances, I would

be glad to be in front of this committee not talking about Iraq, but

this is, in fact, a very grave moment in international history, and

I fear that we are more likely to under react to this than to overreact to it.

So, in keeping with what my focus on this particular crisis has

been, which has been primarily understanding, reporting, ana55

lyzing rather than going through laundry lists of recommendations,

and I endorse most of the things that my colleague recommends,

naturally, and would add a few more, but I think that it is worth

laying out a basis of fact, just so that we can understand the actual

gravity of the situation because I fear that some of this is being lost.

We must start by dispensing with the notion that there is any

sort of legal or moral equivalency between what the Government

of Georgia did and what the Russians did, and I am distressed at

how often people talk about Georgia invading South Ossetia. South

Ossetia was, and is, according to international law, a legal part of

the Republic of Georgia, and the Russians themselves, while operations

were going on, including the Foreign Minister, publicly recognized

that South Ossetia was legally part of the Republic of Georgia.

Now, the Georgian activities and presence in South Ossetia were

governed by a number of international agreements that were mostly

bilateral or quadrilateral agreements with Russia, but those did

not, and explicitly did not, eliminate Georgian control over that republic.

And, therefore, to speak about a Georgian invasion of South

Ossetia is fundamentally to accept the Russian propaganda line,

and I think that we must avoid doing that.

Furthermore, whatever term you want to use for what the Georgians

did, it was not an invasion of Russian territory. It did not

pose the slightest threat to Russian territory. It was not, in any way, an attack on Russia.

The provisions under which the Russian so-called ‘‘peacekeepers’’

are in South Ossetia, and I have read them—they are not that easy

to find, but I tracked them down—do not appear to me to give the

Russians a legal basis for the response that they then launched in

South Ossetia. Certainly, they had no such basis for the reinforcement

with 6,000 troops into Abkhazia, where nothing had happened.

So it actually is, whereas the Georgia action may be open to

question, the legality of the Russian action, I think, is actually not open to question.

Now, I think that it is important to note what happened immediately

after the Georgians went back into South Ossetia with

forces. Within hours, possibly within minutes, a motorized rifle

regiment was on the way from the Russian base of Vladikavkaz

through the Roki Tunnel, which had previously been secured by

forces of either the FSB, which is the KGB’s successor, or the Spetsnaz.

In addition, the Russians immediately scrambled elements of two

airborne divisions, one from the vicinity of Skov and the other one

from the vicinity of Moscow, and they were on their way, following

a path that they had rehearsed not 3 weeks before in a military

exercise called ‘‘Kafkas 2008’’ in which exactly one of those airborne

regiments had, in fact, done exactly what it did again. And

additional reinforcements, including illegal combatants, Cossack

volunteers, and, subsequently, the same Spetsnaz forces that committed

atrocities in Chechnya were also directed into South Ossetia.

But even more than that, the Russians immediately began to attack

targets throughout Georgia, if you will forgive me, because the

Russians had the stated intention of weakening the Georgian military

overall. And they publicly declared that that was their aim,

because they were identifying Georgia as an aggressor state that

posed a threat to them. I would like to just run quickly through

what they actually did.

Russian mechanized units drove from Tskhinvali to the key city

of Gori, which, as we all know, sits astride the road and rail links

from Tbilisi to the Black Sea and is Georgia’s lifeline. Gori is also

the location of Georgia’s single separate tank battalion and single

separate artillery battalion.

Russian troops appeared to have occupied the cantonments of

both of those units. They systemically destroyed the infrastructure

at those bases. They ceased a great deal of Georgian military

equipment, which they subsequently claimed were trophies of war.

They also advanced from Abkhazia not only to Poti, as has been

noticed, which is a civilian port with no military interest for the

Russians, but into the Georgian cities of Zugdidi, which is on the

Abkhaz border, and also Senaki.

Senaki, which is actually nowhere near the combat zone in either

location, is the base of one of Georgia’s most advanced brigades.

And Russian sources report that, as Russian troops sat in Senaki,

airlifts continued of various different types of demolition specialists

so that the Russians could level the base, which was clearly their

intention, and either destroy the equipment that was there or take it away with them.

The Russian troops also occupied the Inguri Hydroelectric Power

Station, which had been jointly controlled by Georgian and Abkhaz

security officials and is jointly shared. That hydroelectric station

provides almost all of the electricity to western Georgia as well as

to Abkhazia. It was never in any danger from Georgian troops. It

is, in fact, I believe, on Georgian territory as opposed to Abkhaz

territory. Be that as it may, there is absolutely no provision for the Russians to have taken it.

Finally, it is very important to recognize that, according to

Human Rights Watch, whereas there is no evidence whatever of a

Georgian genocide, which the Russians have accused, nor is there

any concrete evidence that I have seen of Georgian war crimes,

there is very well-documented evidence of a deliberate campaign of

ethnic cleansing that was conducted by Ossetians against Georgians

within South Ossetia under the control of Russian supposed peacekeepers.

At a minimum, the Russians were gravely derelict in their international

responsibilities in allowing such a campaign to go on. In

reality, it is virtually certain that the Russians were complicit in

that campaign of ethnic cleansing, which, again, I refer you to

Human Rights Watch for satellite imagery and a variety of other

detailed interviews that demonstrate what was going on.

It is also important to understand that the Russians have made

a number of declaratory statements about their justifications for

this that should be incredibly troubling, and I would say that I am

even more troubled than Dr. Fried purported the administration to

be about the import of some of these declarations.

The Russians have asserted their right to intervene in neighboring

states on behalf of Russian citizens. Now, the exact language

that President Medvedev has used does not imply—in fact,

explicitly states—that this is not simply a matter of protecting the

lives of Russian citizens in those areas. But the phrase that he always

uses is that Russia has the right to intervene militarily in its

neighbors to protect the ‘‘lives and dignity’’ of Russians in those

areas. And if you reflect on the fact that every single former Soviet

Republic has a significant Russian minority, that is a limitless declaration

of de facto Russian suzerainty over the former Soviet Republics,

and it is clearly intentional.

If you then look at the phenomenally effective Russia information

operation campaign, an element of that was to bring the Georgian

Government to trial for so-called ‘‘genocide,’’ which did not happen,

and, again, you have to look closely at what the Russians are saying.

The Russian prosecutor general announced that Russian law

specifically gives Russian courts the right to try the leaders of foreign

sovereign states for actions committed against the interests of

Russia in Russian court under Russian law. Again, this is a de

facto assertion of Russian suzerainty, if not sovereignty, over, at

least, the territories of the former Soviet Union, and I think that

it is incredibly distressing.

So you have—just to sum this up very quickly, Russia invaded

the territory of a sovereign state that had not attacked it or threatened

it in any way. Russia conducted a deliberate strategic bombing

campaign against both civilian and military targets in that

state with which Russia was not at war and which was not engaging

in any activity remotely commensurate with such a response.

Russia seized—actually, I think ‘‘stole’’ would be a more appropriate

word—Georgian civilian and military hardware from Georgia

proper. Russia systematically demolished Georgian military infrastructure in Georgia proper.

Russia failed to perform its international legal responsibilities, at

a minimum, by allowing Ossetian separatists to undertake an ethnic-

cleansing campaign in areas that it was occupying, and it has

supported Ossetian separatists militarily in land grab, as they not

only drove Georgian peacekeepers out of the Kodori Gorge, but

then advanced the border of Abkhazia all the way to the Inguri

River with active Russian support.

These activities are flagrant violations of international law; they

are flagrant violations of international norms; they are flagrant violations

of multiple agreements that Russia had voluntarily entered

into, and they are, frankly, on a par, from the standpoint of their

legal impact, with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

Now, that is not to say that we should respond with a Desert

Storm, or a ‘‘Mountain Storm,’’ in this case, to relieve Georgia, and

it is not to say that we should terminate relations with Russia, isolate

Russia permanently, or any of that.

But it is to say that we must recognize, in all of these discussions,

that the actions we are describing strike at the very root and

fabric of international law. And if you ask the question, ‘‘What is

America’s interest here?’’ we can talk about the pipeline, we can

talk about Georgia as an ally, and I think there is something rather

despicable in the notion that, as Georgian troops flew back from

Iraq, where they were fighting alongside our troops, as has been

pointed out, attempting to contain Iran, among other things, that

we should say, ‘‘Oh, well, the Georgians should not have gone into

the their own territory; therefore, the heck with them.’’ I find that

a rather disturbing comment.

But the real interest at stake here is an interest that could not

be more important to the United States of America: Does the

United States of America support international law, or does it not?

If it does, then we have a responsibility to take action in response

to this. I would say, to begin with, the objective of that action

should be to deter and prevent further conflict.

It is very distressing that the Government of Ukraine has become

involved in this conflict in a way that is very destabilizing in

Kiev. It is even more distressing when Izvestia publishes a very

long article explaining in detail not only what Russia’s right is to

reclaim the Crimea but exactly how it would go about doing that.

And when the Russians then announce that they are increasing

their security presence in Black Sea port facilities, I find that very distressing.

Now, the concrete steps; I have gone through some recommendations

in this testimony which I would ask would be included. What

I would highlight is that the Russian assertion, and anyone’s assertion,

that we do not have a right to provide our ally, whether it is

a NATO ally or not, Georgia, with the defensive capability to protect

itself against attack with weapons that do not, in any way,

threaten Russia, unless Russia plans to invade again, is absolutely unacceptable.

We should send, in my view, the Georgians military assistance

they need right now to help deter further Russian aggression because

my assessment of the situation—and I will be eager to hear

what the Department of Defense assessment team comes back

with—is that Georgia, at this moment, is not in any way, capable

of defending itself against Russia, and that means that Georgia’s

continued existence depends upon Moscow’s goodwill; something

that has been, hitherto, in very short supply.

I think we also need to relook at the question of our military assistance

to the Baltic States, who have a virtually nonexistent air

defense, and to Poland, which the Russians have threatened outrageously,

even though the antiballistic system there does not

threaten them in any way, and I think that we need to consider

what measures we can take to help make all of the states——

The ballistic missile defense system that we have installed

in Poland, which does not threaten Russia in any way, and

I would be happy to go into that more in the questions, if you want.

We should be helping these states to become unattractive targets

of further Russian aggression by providing them with defensive capabilities

and I think—and I will close on this—it is important to

recognize that this is not the Red Army; it is not the Red Air Force.

We are not talking about multi-million-man armed forces with

which the Russians can overwhelm everybody.

The Russian military threat is a threat that can be deterred. It

can be deterred conventionally, and I think that it would be well

in our interests, very much in our interests, to do that because if

the objective is not to have conflict, making it so that the states

that are most threatened by conflict can defend themselves adequately

is one of the best ways to begin. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I am giving you a preview of a report

that we will be releasing at AEI subsequently, where we have

taken a hard look at what the military balance actually is.

The Ukrainian military is actually a pretty formidable force, and

it is not something that I think the Russians could imagine attacking,

even as it is right now. The issue with the defense of Ukraine

primarily comes in when the Russians have announced, and are engaged

in, what looks like a very ambitious modernization.

Yes. The Russians probably could take Sevastopol,

the port facility there. Now, you get down into very small scenarios.

Yes, they probably could do that, although it would be,

frankly, much harder for them than what they did in Georgia.

We have to understand that what they did in Georgia was about

the easiest thing of any of these because it was right there on their

border. They have a military base that is right there.

They were able to control the pass through the mountain right

away, and this is a very important point: The Georgians had configured

their military to assist us and NATO in peacekeeping missions,

and they had not, in any way, configured their military, and

this was a lapse, I think, in our assistance program to them. They

had not, in any way, configured their military to resist Russian aggression.

That is not the case with Ukraine, and it is definitely not

the case with the Baltic States.

If you look at the limitations that the Russian military showed,

even in this relatively easy undertaking, I do think that it is within

the realm of the conceivable that we could make it rather unattractive.

Can we stop them? No, of course, not. If they want to take

Estonia, we cannot stop then without NATO intervention, and, of

course, Estonia is a NATO member.

Ukraine certainly can defend itself, but I think we could make

even the Balts, even on their own, very unappealing with not a lot of investment.

Well, it would not necessarily be a waste of money—

a lot of that equipment might be helpful—but I agree with the

thrust of your point, which is that we need to fundamentally

rethink the purpose of our engagement with Georgia, and, frankly,

we need to fundamentally rethink the purpose of NATO.

NATO has existed for the past two decades on the premise that

there was no military threat from Russia. If that is, in fact, not

true, and the Eastern European members of the alliance certainly

feel that it is no longer true, then we need a fundamental, top-tobottom

assessment of the purpose of that alliance, and what we are doing with it.

Congresswoman, thank you. On the question of

Israel and Georgia, I have to say it has been astonishing to watch,

in general, the Orwellian information operations campaign that the

Russians have conducted trying to persuade the world that Georgia’s

19,000 soldiers were a threat to the existence of the Russian

Empire, among other things.

But also the notion that this was all an Israeli plot, which was

prominently spread initially by the South Ossetian separatist government

and then picked up by elements of the Russian media,

and, in fact, it has been reported as a United States-Israeli plot to

provide us or somebody with the bases from which to hit Iran and so forth.

Of course, in the world, one can never rule out possibilities, and

I do not know, but it is one of the most absurd suggestions that

I have ever heard. It flies into the face of the fact that the Israelis

actually canceled the defense agreements that they had made with

Georgia previously to this. It flies in the face of the fact that Georgia

is not a great place to base anything from if you are trying to

hit Bashkir, which is kind of a long way away, and neither we nor

the Israelis would need to do that. So I think that is unlikely.

Your larger question about Russia smoothing Iran’s path, I

think, is a very important question, and it is something we need

to get into the heart of this whole question, and, obviously, this is not the forum for it.

What exactly has Russia been doing for us vis-a´-vis Iran? Russia

has been providing Iran with nuclear equipment; Russia has been

blocking the imposition of sanctions with teeth and, in general,

dragging its feet. Russia has publicly supported Iran’s right to a

nuclear program, which is basically code in Tehran for a weapons program.

Even though the Russians say that they are not in favor of that,

the Russians are planning to provide the Iranians, apparently,

with S–300 advanced surface-to-air missiles and so forth. I know

that has been denied in the press, but, frankly, lots of things are

denied in the press, and so on.

So what exactly they have been doing is unclear. What is clear

is that if you look at the reaction in the Caucasus and in that region,

it is very straightforward, that the Iranians lay pretty low,

the Armenians lay very low, the Azheris immediately left to denounce

the Russia invasion. Why? Because there is, in fact, something

of an axis that goes from Baku to Tbilisi to Kiev of states

that feel themselves threatened by Russia and look to the West.

And then there is a Russia—I do not want to include Armenia because

I do not want to imply that more than is fair—but a Russia-

Tehran access, at any event, which works the other way.

As we look at this, we need to decide this is, I am afraid, a battle

for the Caucasus, and, for a variety of reasons, it matters to us who

wins, and I think we should not mistake that.

I think it is very clear that this action that the Russians

have taken has strained Russia’s relationship with every

country that Russia has a relationship with, and it has imposed a

very interesting set of cross-strains, both on the Shanghai Cooperation

Organization and also on the Commonwealth of Independent

States, whose significance, I think, has been revealed to be busier

than one might have thought.

I am of the opinion that the statement of the SCO was less of

a slap to the Russians than some might imagine. I have a hard

time believing that Putin thought that the Chinese would back him

publicly in this regard, given China’s own issues. So I would not

imagine that he looked for that, and the statement itself is actually

rather balanced and nuanced. The slap part got a lot of play in the

Western press, but the rest of it; there is support for Russia there, too.

I think that what surprised the Russians is that the Kazakhs

and the Byelorussians, whom they had thought would be tame lap

dogs, have still not recognized, and I think that is an indication to

them that the states of the former Soviet Union are looking at this

and saying, Hey, are we really going back to that or what? Please.

Are we going to race to the buzzer?

First of all, Medvedev made another speech. He gave

an interview on August 31st, in which he laid out the five principles

that govern Russian foreign policy, and one of those principles

is that Russia has a sphere of influence which includes the

territories of the former Soviet Union, and everybody else needs to

keep out, and it was as clear a statement of a Russian Monroe Doctrine, as you can desire.

So Medvedev plays different speeches to different audiences rather

better than Putin, by the way, who is rather monotonous, and

I was there, Congressman Berman, at the Virkunda, where he

made that speech, and it peeled the paint off the walls.

But, on the general point, I think that—I, personally, think that

we probably could have done more in the 1990s to reach out to the

Russians, and I was actually watching from afar, not happy with

some of the decisions that were made and, particularly, some of the

rather condescending and hectoring tone that we used toward the

Russians and toward Yeltsin’s Russia, which was clearly trying to

move in the right direction.

I was also, and I will be honest with you, I was skeptical about

the wisdom of expanding NATO precisely because of the question

of whether we were prepared to back the Article V guarantees that we were extending.

What I want to say, though, is, unfortunately, we are where we

are, and whereas I think that we might have had more luck with

Yeltsin’s Russia, I do not think we ever really had a chance with

Putin’s Russia. And the problem with some of the discussions we

have had about the desirability of NATO expansion or this or that

is that we have done it. We have expanded NATO. And the new

NATO states, which are not that new anymore, in the Balts, identified

their security interests with the security interests of Georgia,

and they have done that explicitly in, among other things, calling

for Georgian accession to NATO.

So, although I agree with you that we can go back and look at

errors that were made in the past, I think, unfortunately, it does

not help us inform future policy decisions.

I want to violently agree with that. I have been

studying Russia, one way or another, almost all my life, and, like

Mike and unlike some of my colleagues in the field, I like Russians.

And I did think that in the 1990s there was a real possibility for

the development of a strategic partnership, and I was one of those

people who were running around saying, you know, the United

States and Russia have no interests in conflict in the world, and

there is no reason why we should not, and we have many interests in concert.

As the Russian democracy was developing, it seemed to me that

the window toward normalization was opening, and I very much

wanted to see it that way. And I have to tell you that I have been

feeling this sort of a personal pain as I have now had to go through

reading Russian military Web sites, which before I had been reading

just to sort of see the Russian take on things and treating Russia

like any other state, and now have to look at them as a state

that has attacked and invaded the territory of our ally. I actually

find it emotionally distressing, I have to tell you.

So I am not here beating the drum for war with Russia: (A) I do

not want to fight a war with Russia, and (B) I am not here with

any enthusiasm along the anti-Russian lines. I think Kennan was

wrong. I think the problem was the Soviet Union and was not Russia.

I have written a book that I will not send you because you would

find it very boring about how Russia actually did not have the sort

of imperialistic designs, even in the 19th century, that are commonly

attributed to it, and so I totally agree with Mike that that is not the deal.

But the problem is that we do not deal with peoples; we deal

with leaders, and, in Putin, we are dealing with an ex-KGB thug

who has very much of a KGB mind-set about the world and Russia’s

place in it. This is a guy who has mourned the loss of the Soviet

Union, which is a remarkable statement in itself if you think

about it and clearly has designs.

Mike is right. They are not the unanimous designs of the Russian

people, but we have had this conversation before, too.

If what we want to do—and I think this is all of our objective—

is to find a way to work Russia back into being a constructive partner

and a member of the world community, then you need to strike

the right balance, of course, but you cannot reward the aggressor,

and you cannot allow the aggressor to benefit, and you need to

show that there is a price, and you need to show that the next

thing will be harder and something that really does not want to happen.

That is why I think concepts of deterrence and containment come

back here, but the objective is not to isolate Russia or make this

government fall or anything like that. The objective is, of course,

to work Russia back onto the path of a normal relationship.

Congressman, if I could start?

On the last point, I think it is important to understand

that the Russian recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia

is itself a violation of the Six-Point Agreement.

The recognition. It depends on what——

No, it is not, actually. I mean, the problem with the

cease-fire is that the cease-fire itself was, de facto, the Russian ultimatum

to Georgia, which our good friend, Mr. Sarkozy, presented

as a compromise, but, in fact, it was not, and it was virtually dictated by the Russians.

It did not contain in it provisions addressing the question of

Georgian peacekeepers in Abkhazia or South Ossetia, which the

Russians expelled and which the Russians have now said will not come back.

So this is not actually a cease-fire, in the sense of any sort of return to a status quo.

We clarified, which the Russians rejected, and the

Russians have stated repeatedly that the South Ossetians and

Abkhazians will not tolerate the presence of Georgia. Yes, sir.

Because the sixth point of that agreement, of the

Sarkozy-Medvedev Agreement, is that the future status of those

two areas would be determined through international negotiation——

When the Russians unilaterally recognize

them, and that is a violation, which, of course, is in contrast

with what happened in Kosovo, as has been pointed out.

Also, I think it is important to point out that one of the interesting

things about Kosovo is it was not a unilateral American action;

it was a multilateral action. We did it in concert with the Europeans.

At various points of the negotiation, we had to be led by

the Europeans. This is being portrayed as an American action,

when, in fact, it was a Western action, which the Russians chose

to resist. We can have a conversation about that.

Congressman, with all respect, the truce was broken

when the Russian so-called ‘‘peacekeepers’’ allowed South Ossetian

militias to attack Georgians, both in South Ossetia and outside of

Georgia.

You might also say——

It happened——

I understand, Congressman. The problem is that

South Ossetia was not, at the time, an independent state. It was,

at the time, a part of Georgia, and the only reason there were Russians

present there was because of bilateral and quadrilateral

agreements that they had with the Georgians.

So, in principle, Russia has no right to go beyond those boundaries,

under any circumstances, in international law because there

is no justification in those agreements whatsoever. It is not even

clear to me that those agreements provide justification for the reinforcement,

although, again, if they had stopped at that.

But the point is we have to stop treating these areas as though

they were independent. Legally, and according to the Russians,

they were part of Georgia, so there was a movement of Georgian

forces around Georgia, and we are having discussions, but that is the answer.

But moving beyond that, where we could have a nuanced discussion,

when they moved into Poti and Senaki and Gori, that was a

straightforward violation of international law.

And if I said that it was, would——

And I did, too, but would we then say that we, therefore,

have to support every illegal action that happened subsequently?

Well, Mr. Congressman, with respect, I think the

standard should be the standard of international law that we are

supporting, and if we want to say that Kosovo was a mistake,

which I, frankly, do not think it was, then we can say that it was

a mistake. But if we are going to use that as justification to, you know——

I am a firm believer in the question of balance, particularly

in the issue of analysis, before coming to conclusions, and

that is why I have spent my time miserably engrossed in Russian

press statements, Russian media, South Ossetian press statements,

Abkhazian press statements, as well as Georgian press statements,

and, frankly, I spend more time reading what the Russians have

to say about this and what the South Ossetians do than looking at

the formal press statements from Georgia.

I am very cognizant of the fact that the Russians are engaged in

a very massive information operation that has as its aim deceiving

us about what actually happened. And I could take you, if you

wanted, through a number of very specific cases where the Russians

have put out things that were factually incorrect, repeated

them multiple times, and then dropped them when it became clear

that they were being revealed.

This goes also to the question of the point that Mr. Delahunt

raised about the trash talk. We are not engaged in trash talk. If

you want trash talk, read what the Russians say.

It does not bother me either, but I think that you

have to recognize that there has to be an element of response to

what they perceive as an expression of their strength, and that is

the part of the balance that has to be there.

I think, frankly, $1 billion; I do not know how to evaluate whether

$1 billion is the right amount of money for this. Georgia has suffered

very, very badly from this. We are not the only state contributing,

although that would be, by far, the largest contribution, obviously.

I think the Kuwaitis immediately wrote them a check for

something. And you are right. It would be nice if everyone else would step up.

Frankly, in my opinion, I think the administration is overcompensating

with the size of that money for the fact that it is unwilling

to provide military assistance directly to Georgia.

I would prefer to see, in principle, a smaller amount

of humanitarian aid and providing Georgia with the military capabilities

that it would need to defend itself. And I agree with you,

we do not need to engage in trash talk. But we do have to deal

with this Russian information campaign that seems to be confusing

a lot of people about what actually happened, and, granted, we

should do that in a non-confrontational way. If you would like, I

will retract calling Putin a bully or a thug or whatever I called

him. But we need to face the facts, and the Russians have been trying

to present a certain set of facts, and they are not correct.

Well, it is an excellent question and may be a good

one to end on, it sounds like. I would add to your adjective, ‘‘balance,’’

I would add ‘‘smart, multipronged, strategic, dual-track,’’

and many other adjectives so that we get beyond, either we just do

nothing and get back to where we were before or isolation. And

that was the thrust of what my written statement is about, exactly,

we have to do these things in a smart, big, multipronged way.

The second reason I want to emphasize is this is not just about

Abkhazia and South Ossetia. If you come away from this hearing

thinking that this is just some little crisis, and when it gets out in

the New York Times or the Wall Street Journal, this is a much bigger

strategic challenge that we are facing in the heart of Europe.

I think it has been an incredible achievement, and you are all part

of it, that we have a Europe, whole and free, and that we help to

manage the collapse of the last great empire on the planet in a

rather peaceful way. That is now what the stakes are.

So whether a billion, that is why you get paid the big bucks you do, to make——

Those decisions about the tradeoffs. I take those as very serious questions.

But I want you to know that we are talking about some really

big stakes here, and I would not want the historians, when they

go back, to say, ‘‘It was in Abkhazia or South Ossetia that Europe,

whole and free, began to unravel.’’ We do not want to be the ones

that were not seeing the bigger picture.

Finally, Congressman, if I could just echo, I think what you said

about personalization is a very, very important point for diplomacy,

and it is not just about the trash talk. It can be about the love talk,

too. You know, we do not have to have friends. We do not have to

have buddies. We do not have to look into people’s souls.

We have interests that we advance by engaging with other governments,

and I think—thinking of our relationship with Russia,

perhaps even our relationship with Georgia, and we could go back

to our relationships with other leaders in other places, including

earlier in Russia—that is a means to an end; it is not the end of

American foreign policy. Of course, we would rather have good relations,

but the over personalization, I think, has gotten us into a

whole heap of trouble with these countries that we have been talking

about now, and I would strongly resist ever personalizing the relationship again.

The last thing I would say, President Medvedev is not in charge

of foreign policy. I know, analytically, that is not true. As an academic,

I am going to tell you that is not true, but we have a national

security interest, I believe, in affirming what the Russian

Constitution says and to deal with him as a professional, not as a

buddy, not as an enemy, but as our interlocutor moving forward.

Well, Congressman, I can read you, at any event, my

translation of his interview, which is: ‘‘Fourth, an unquestionable

priority for us is the defense of the lives and dignity of our citizens

wherever they are located.’’

It is not specified.

It is not limited. That is correct, sir. this year.