Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

Last week, I had the opportunity to meet with a delegation of

parliamentarians and government officials from Georgia, and our

conversation drove home for me how difficult the situation is now

in that country, both for its people and its government.

Georgia’s future and the future of the entire region of the former

Soviet Union and Eastern Europe depends, to a large degree, on

how the United States and leading states of the European Union

react, in the coming weeks and months ahead, to the Russian invasion of Georgia.

A few important facts must be highlighted. The recent invasion

by Russian military forces had been planned for some time by the

regime in Moscow. The Russian Government has aggressively and

provocatively involved itself in the affairs of Georgia, not just in recent

years but for the entire period since that small country gained

its independence in 1991.

Russia has provided military support of all types to the separatist

regions of Georgia for almost two decades. The Russian Government

has orchestrated the grant of Russian citizenship to the

residents of those separatist regions, providing an excuse with

which to later intervene on their behalf in the military operation

the world witnessed last month.

The so-called ‘‘Russian peacekeepers’’ in the separatist region of

Georgia have never been impartial. They have served as simply another

means by which Moscow has interfered in Georgia’s internal

affairs. Instead, the Putin regime in Moscow would like nothing

better than to see the disintegration of the current Georgian Government.

Mr. Putin’s style of government in Moscow is in stark contrast

to the increasingly democratic governments in countries along Russia’s

borders, and, more importantly, the Georgian Government has

closed Russia’s military bases and has opened a pipeline route for

regional gas and oil supplies that is not under Russia’s control.

The Putin government wants to ensure that Russia sits astride

the routes that will move the huge reserves of gas and oil that lie

in Central Asia and the Caucasus to markets in Europe and the

rest of the world. Some commentators have warned that Russia’s

invasion of Georgia is reminiscent of Germany’s invasion and later

destruction of the independent state of Czechoslovakia in the late 1930s.

There is much for us to consider in that analogy, primarily the

failures of the leading European states of the late 1930s to understand

the nature of that aggression. That failure ultimately

emboldened Germany to turn its eyes to yet more countries in its

campaign to expand its feared power in Eastern Europe.

We must ask ourselves what further steps the Putin regime may

take to wrap itself in the cloak of Russian nationalism in order to

maintain its hold on power, to justify its aggression, to divert attention

from its corruption and criminality.

Will there be claims that parts of Ukraine rightfully belong in

Russia? Will there be pressure on the Baltic States, where so many

ethnic Russians live? Will Northern Kazakhstan and its large population

of ethnic Russians become an issue? Will Russian troops

ever leave the independent country of Moldova, which has sought

their withdrawal for many years?

I want to express support for the proposal to provide aid expeditiously

to the Georgian people by relocating some of our existing

foreign aid funds. Such a relocation allows us to be supportive of

Georgia in this time of need while acknowledging that we have fiscal demands in other areas.

We also support current efforts involving our European allies and

the multilateral development banks toward a truly international aid effort to support Georgia.

Mr. Chairman, unrelated to the situation in Georgia and Russia’s

invasion of that country, I would like to raise an issue that is of great concern to us.

Late yesterday evening, we were provided notice, in our first

glance ever at a stridently partisan, so-called ‘‘report’’ to be issued

today under committee seal and under your name, Mr. Berman,

and title as committee chairman. The original text claimed to have

issues prepared by the staff of the Homeland Security and Foreign

Affairs Committees presumed to describe various issues that the

committees had found and claimed that the committees are

alarmed by alleged shortcomings in the wake of 911.

In reality, this partisan document was prepared in secrecy, without

any consultation, notice, input, or even review from minority

members or staff, and was released without consent from a majority

of the members of this committee.

Mr. Chairman, as you and your staff are aware, committee rule

11(b) clearly states that no document which purports to express

publicly the views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations of the

committee may be released to the public until first approved by a

majority of the members of the committee. Furthermore, any such

document must be provided to members beforehand, who have the

right to include views and disclaimers in the material that is to be

released. None of these things have been done.

Mr. Chairman, as we all know, the rules exist to ensure that

election year partisanship not be allowed to cloak itself in the mantle

of our committee. This effort cheapens this committee’s standing

and reputation for truly being a cooperative, bipartisan committee.

I am saddened by the release of such a slanted document on the

eve of the 911 commemoration. It is divisive and vitriolic at a time

of a grave moment in our Nation’s history, when we, as elected representatives

of the people, should unite to honor and remember the

victims of this most horrible attack and work to prevent the enemies

of freedom from again striking our homeland.

As such, Mr. Chairman, I would like for you to publicly confirm,

congruent with our committee rules, that this paper was solely the

work product of Democratic staffers and that it does not constitute

an official committee product, and it is not the result of any hearing,

briefings, or official reviews conducted by this committee.

Thank you very much for the time, Mr. Chairman. Absolutely.

Mr. Chairman, if you could yield for—of your time——

[continuing]. Because I have it here, and it is

the official seal of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, and I

beg to differ, Mr. Chairman, with your representation of what it

purports to be. It looks pretty official, unless it is one of those——

Well, it says ‘‘U.S. Committee,’’ as you can read, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you so much. If the gentleman would

just further yield, it does say that it was prepared by the staff, but

it does purport to be an official document coming from our committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Ambassador Fried, for joining us today.

The Russian Foreign Minister recently said, and I quote, ‘‘The

United States will have to choose between a virtual project or a

real partnership.’’ This was interpreted by many to mean that if

the United States abandoned its support for Georgia, it might expect

cooperation from Georgia, from Russia, on our united front,

the United States and our European allies, to prevent Iran from gaining nuclear weapons.

I wanted to ask you a series of questions, first, if you agree with

that interpretation of what the Foreign Minister said, and, in addressing

some of the statements made today about our bilateral relationship

with Russia and issues of mutual concern, such as Iran,

has Russia not been providing nuclear technology and assistance to

Iran for decades? Has Russia not provided missile assistance to Iran for decades?

And long before Russia’s invasion of Georgia, was Russia not one

of two countries blocking substantive, strong sanctions against

Iran? Has Russia’s gas monopoly, GAZPROM, not been investing in

Iran’s energy sector, in violation of United States sanctions, laws,

in fact, since 1996? Has Russia not said that it is increasing its assistance

to Iran and its nuclear project, and, as such, would you not

agree that Russian aggression in Georgia is separate from its complicity

in enhancing Iran’s nuclear and missile program?

In fact, Mr. Chairman, before the break, this committee adopted

legislation that prohibited a nuclear cooperation agreement with

Russia unless the President certified that Russia had stopped helping

Iran’s nuclear, biological, chemical, and missile programs.

So if you could put the situation regarding Russia and Georgia

in context with other threats that we face and Russia’s noncooperation

in helping us deal with those threats, specifically, Iran.

Ambassador Fried, I am sorry to cut you off,

but I only have 1 minute. I just want to point out, with that time,

that the Georgian Government has been very helpful to the United

States, and that has not been brought out, deploying 2,000 troops

to intercept weapons coming into Iraq from Iran as part of a

United States-led force in Iraq, and it is trying to intercept weapons

and related technologies that might reach Iran across Georgia territory.

So I thank you, Mr. Ambassador, and I am so sorry for no time.

I talked too long. Thirty seconds. Thank you.

Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. I would

like to ask both of you questions dealing with Iran, like I had asked the Ambassador.

Dr. McFaul, you say, in your testimony, that it is a misunderstanding

to think that if we sort of go along with what Russia

wants in Georgia, we will be getting more help from Russia in dealing

with Iran. If we basically acquiesce in the situation that Russia

has created in Georgia, how do we anticipate specifically that we

would be disappointed in our hopes that Russia would be more helpful regarding Iran?

For you, Dr. Kagan, Russia’s relationship with Iran is troubling

and includes sales, as I had said, of advanced conventional weapons,

the nuclear technology, and I came across an interesting oped

in the Washington Times last Thursday wherein the author alleges

that Georgia has had a quiet but substantial relationship

with Israel, including a possible agreement that Israel might use

Georgian air space and maybe a couple of bases if and when Iran

develops a nuclear capability and if and when Israel mounts a preemptive strike against that.

So, by invading Georgia and threatening to destabilize the current

Georgian Government, is Russia quietly again smoothing the

path for Iran’s development of nuclear weaponry? Dr. McFaul?

Thank you, sir. Dr. Kagan?

Thank you very much, gentlemen. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.