Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I appreciate

you calling this hearing. Before I start my opening comment

I would simply like to join you in welcoming Annette Lantos. And

it is quite fitting that we are holding a hearing on U.S.-Russia relationships

with one of our witnesses being Katrina Lantos Swett

and Annette Lantos in the audience, because there really was no

more knowledgeable and articulate Member of Congress on the

issue of U.S.-Soviet and then U.S.-Russia relationships than our

late chairman, Mr. Lantos. And it is very good to have you here.

When the Obama administration took office in January 2009, the

U.S.-Russia relationship was at one of its lowest points since the

fall of communism at the end of the Cold War. President Obama

wisely decided that permitting this relationship to falter did not

serve U.S. interests, and the administration set a new policy,

branded as the reset, to increase engagement on a number of levels.

While there remain significant areas of disagreement between

the U.S. and Russia, no doubt, including Russia’s record on human

rights, democracy, and rule of law, its conflict with Georgia, and

Moscow’s arms sales to dictatorial regimes, there can be no doubt

that the reset has led to increased cooperation between our two

countries in a number of critical areas. Most importantly, Russia,

whose training and technology during the 1990s played a significant

role in the advancement of Iran’s nuclear weapons program,

Russia has played a far more constructive role in efforts to prevent

Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability. Yes, they watered

down the U.N. resolution, but the resolution that they voted

for was the strongest by far resolution on this subject that the U.N.

Security Council had ever adopted.

The Russians at the same time canceled a contract to sell Tehran

the sophisticated S–300 air defense system, an air defense system

that would have rendered talk of a military option much weaker

in terms of its import and effect on Iranian behavior.

In April 2010, President Obama and Medvedev signed the landmark

New START agreement. And Russia already cut their nuclear

arsenal below the 1,550 ceiling it is obligated to reach by

2018. Some dismiss this significant achievement, saying Moscow

would have reduced their nuclear missiles to this level for economic

reasons anyway. These critics neglect to mention that without New

START there would be no legal inspection, no verification monitoring

regime, as the previous one expired with START 1. There

would also be no limits on the numbers and types of new nuclear

missiles Moscow could deploy.

President Reagan famously said, ‘‘Trust but verify.’’ It seems that

some critics would have preferred to trust their assumptions about

Russian nuclear security outlays and to trust Russia not to build

more and more newer missiles than give President Obama credit

for safeguarding U.S. nuclear security.

Russia has also supported the Northern Distribution Network.

This is very important. Since early 2009 it has served as a critical

transit route through Russia and Central Asia to support U.S. military

operations in Afghanistan. Almost two-thirds of the nonlethal

materials we need to support our troops are now shipped on this

route, and it is especially critical today, given the increasing difficulty

of moving goods through Pakistan.

Russia and the United States also have a mutual interest in preventing

the flow of narcotics from Afghanistan, and cooperation on

counternarcotics efforts have also increased as a result of reset.

And finally, as Russia continues to negotiate its entry into the

World Trade Organization, it has reopened its markets to imports

of U.S.-produced meat, a market that largely was closed when

President Obama took office. Those exports could total as much as

$500 million this year. This means more jobs for Americans.

I do associate myself with the chairman’s remarks regarding

Russian enforcement of intellectual property issue. This is a critical

trade issue. Russia’s laws, to have meaning, must be enforced.

Now, there is part of this glass that is half empty. Despite repeated

calls by President Obama and Secretary Clinton, Russia

still refuses to comply with the cease-fire agreement that ended the

August 2008 conflict with Georgia. As a result, there are more Russian

troops stationed in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and

South Ossetia than before the conflict. This is a clear violation of

the agreement hammered out by President Nicholas Sarkozy.

The administration should continue to hold Russia to its commitments

at the ongoing talks with Georgia in Geneva. While Russia

remains one of the least free countries in Europe, and we are right

to raise serious concerns about Russia’s dismal record on democracy,

human rights, and the rule of law.

The recent decision by the Russian Ministry of Justice to deny

registration to the People’s Freedom Party is emblematic of the obstacles

faced by opponents of the government. Yet the space for

public discourse in Russia has widened to some extent in the last

2 years. Russia’s young tech-savvy President has steadfastly fought

efforts to restrict the Internet, and an increasing number of Russians

are taking on their government with new-found activism.

A significant number of Russian citizens has stepped forward to

protest the destruction of a forest to build a highway between Moscow

and Saint Petersburg. Regrettably, those who engage in such

protests sometimes pay a very steep price. After exposing corruption

by tax authorities, lawyer Sergei Magnitsky was murdered.

Even if the investigation of his death ordered by President

Medvedev is allowed to run its course and the perpetrators brought

to justice, it will not bring back a husband to his wife, a father to

his children, or a son to his parents.

Madam Chairman, focusing only on areas of disagreement with

Russia creates a distorted picture of the complex U.S.-Russia relationship,

but it is critical that these troubling issues not get swept

under the rug. I look forward to hearing the views of our panel on

areas of both cooperation and disagreement with Russia, and yield

back the balance of my time.

Well, thank you. The chair’s question brought a

certain level of consensus to the three panelists in terms of linkage

and particular reference to the Magnitsky bill.

Boris Nemtsov was always thought of as one of the most enlightened

and progressive thinkers of the post-Soviet era, and did some

amazing things as a local governor and later on in Moscow, and it

was sort of a shocking development to see that action taken.

But on the larger scale, Dr. Cohen and Ambassador Sestanovich

seem to have very different conclusions about the reset. Dr. Cohen

talks about naivete´, paltry gains, totally misplaced judgment by the

administration in focusing on Medvedev. And Ambassador

Sestanovich thinks the notion of a pause right now is a mistake.

In a careful, calculated way, once you continue to pursue the

reset with very realistic understandings about our differences, and

without any intent of sweeping those differences under the rug, I

would like each of you to—perhaps starting with you Ambassador

Sestanovich—to take the fundamental thrust of Dr. Cohen’s testimony

and address where you differ from it, and Dr. Cohen with Ambassador Sestanovich.

Let me just, since there is not really enough time

for you to respond, I will use my last 20 seconds to make my own

point and hopefully we can get your response later.

But I have vivid memories. By 2008, it was that administration,

the administration that preceded Obama’s, that had delinked all

issues. It was pursuing U.S. nuclear cooperation with Russia even

as Iran was—Russia was doing nothing to help us deal with Iran’s

nuclear weapons program. It was pushing the missile defense without

getting any particular broader support from Russia on any

issue. Every issue was in its own different category, and there was no linkage.

I do think one wants to have a coherent and comprehensive policy

here and that things are much closer to that these days than they were 21⁄2 years ago.