Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to focus on some of the comments you have made

on the international aspects of this as they pertain to Syria’s neighbors.

You pointed out that Turkey has changed its position and

now harbors a segment of the Syrian opposition within its borders.

But the Lebanese essentially would still appear to be very worried

about the unrest spilling across the Syrian border and upsetting

their own domestic situation. This is particularly true with regard

to the Christians in Lebanon and others fearing the coming of a

Sunni regime if the Alawites in Syria are not able to hang on.

In addition to that, there is the problem that is faced by Israel,

or at least as Israelis have themselves expressed, that Syria was

never a friend, but it was a so-called stable antagonist that was not

bound to attack Israel. However, some in Israel now worry that

under pressure Assad or others might decide to attack in the hope

of gaining some adherence from other anti-Israeli elements in the

Middle East, thus creating an unstable situation on yet another

front for Israel given the Arab Spring difficulties with Egypt and

with others.

Now, in the midst of all of this, the United States understandably

is concentrating upon the human rights dilemmas of individuals

who want their rights in the country. It has been noted, at

least by some of our staff members, in the largest cities there have

been very few demonstrations, but out in the hustings, there have

been many more. And this leads once again to feelings about sectarian

violence, particularly between the Alawites and the Sunnis.

As you try to formulate policy, surely all of these things are on

your mind and the Secretary’s. On the one hand, you have each of

us wanting you to do something to save people who are in the

streets indicating they would like to have better civil rights, and

we sympathize with that. On the other hand, it could very well be

that as we demand the departure of Assad or the departure of

Assad plus the people he is with, we tip the scales in this Alawite/

Sunni business, and this leads to unintended consequences. After

all, this was a Syrian problem. But given the Arab Spring and the

current volatile situation in the Middle East, it has all sorts of

other international implications.

Now, under those circumstances, what is a policy that we should

adopt that tries to bring a degree of stability to the situation even

as we promote human rights and continue to espouse those things

that we believe are most important? Or are we going to be a tipping

force demanding action by the U.N. or demanding action

through sanctions of various sorts? Although the economy of Syria

appears to not be drying up, it has been deprived of much of its

oil revenue. So we have already had an effect. How much of an

effect do we want to have? And if we were successful and Assad

left, what would we be left with at that point? What happens to

all of the surrounding territories?

Hypothetically let us say he does go tomorrow.

Who steps in and then what do they do?

Thank you. As this continues to play out, I am

hopeful that we are taking into account the potential for chaos and

the lack of people who have formulated what the new plans are or

come together at this point.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask about the food

situation in Syria. The reason I ask is that over in the Agriculture

Committee from time to time we get reports about the changes in

exports or imports in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya after the Arab

Spring. Without going into all the details, the facts are that the expense

of importing grains that were a part of the diets of those

countries has increased significantly. Beyond that, the capacity to

pay and to exchange moneys, given problems in the banking system,

have created a situation in which in these countries there may

be as much as a 40-percent decline in the amount of food being consumed

by the people. That is a very large change. And some have

pointed out in the past that leaders in these countries retain their

power through so-called food subsidies, in other words, if people

were very unhappy in the hustings, somehow they were pacified by

money coming out that they use for food.

What I am not clear about is how this applies to Syria, because

I really have not heard anything on any nutrition and food supply

impacts resulting from the sanctions or the loss of export money or

exchange. Has there been an impact there? BETTY