Thank you very much, Senator Casey.

Welcome to all of you.

We have many, many issues that are important under the purview

of this committee that deals with the Near East and North

Africa. The questions and the issues surrounding Syria certainly

are at the top of that list. All of us have watched—not only us in

this committee, all Americans—the world has watched as things

have unfolded in the Middle East in the Arab world this spring. We

have watched them play out, and now everything seems to be

focused on Syria. That seems to be where the current unresolved

issues are.

There is a huge difference here, of course, between Syria and

what happened in Libya. The opposition in Syria is essentially unarmed,

and as a result of that, they do not have the ability that

the Libyan people had to do what they believed needed to be done.

We, as the United States, need a policy that is very clear that

we will do everything we can to cut off the sources of Assad’s

finances and also the flow of weapons and to do everything we can

to isolate this regime.

I agree with Senator Casey. Mr. Ford is the right person. I disagreed

with appointing an Ambassador because Assad had been so

brutal with his people. Having said that, I agree with the President

that Mr. Ford is the right person for the job.

I think it is in the interest of every American and, indeed, the

interest of the civilized world to isolate this regime as much as possible.

This is a bipartisan issue. It is an American issue.

I am anxious to hear the suggestions that we get from the panel

and hear about the efforts that we are making in that regard, and

all of us can commit to move forward to do our best to isolate the

regime which hopefully will reach the results that all of us want to see.

Thank you, Senator Casey.

Thank you.

Mr. Feltman, in your comments, I guess at least the hint was

that we need to all buckle up and get ready for the long haul here.

Is that a result of the assessment that the people are going to have

a difficult time inasmuch as they are essentially unarmed in their

attempt to overthrow the government?

How long can they hold on?

Thank you.

Mr. Bronin, how would you compare the sanctions we have in

place on Syria to the sanctions we have in place on Iran on a scale

of 1 to 10? Compare the two so we can get a feel as to how those

two match each other.

Would you say they are comparable?

And how about comparing those then to what we

did in Libya when the chaos started there? Is it comparable to

what we did there?

What can you tell us about—and I am not asking

for anything classified, obviously, but what can you tell us about

your expectations? You know, we have all seen year-after-year

sanctions, for instance, on Iran, and you know, a regime seems to

be able to withstand a whole lot of pain in order to hang onto

power. How do you assess where we are headed in Syria as far as

the regime’s ability to survive just as Iran is?

Thank you.

Thank you, Senator Casey.