Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and to the other

chairman who was here first, I am glad we are having this hearing

and I hope we will have multiple hearings on Iran. It feels to me

that we are moving into a position where military conflict is going

to be weighed, and I cannot imagine why we are not having a hearing

on Iran, both classified and unclassified, every single week. But

I sure hope in your temporary capacity, we can urge that. I would

think all of us would benefit from it.

But we thank both of you for your testimony and for your service to our country.

We had a classified briefing yesterday that could not have been

more different than the one we are having today. It is really kind of fascinating.

You know, when we talk about the opposition groups, this part

I do not think is classified. I mean, you ask, OK, what are these

guys fighting for? The word ‘‘democracy’’ never comes up. I mean,

basically you have got an Alawite minority that has dominion over,

if you will, a Sunni population mostly, and what the Sunnis are

fighting for is dominion over the minority population. I mean, we

heard no words whatsoever about anything other than this being

a conflict between one group of people that has been oppressed by

another group of people and their desire to change that equation.

And so when I hear these flowery statements, I do hope, especially

Ambassador Ford, since you have been there, if you could

educate us a little bit because this is a night and day presentation

from what we had through our intelligence community yesterday.

If I could, I mean, I appreciate all the background

and history. But I think what you are saying is there is no

central vision. There are lots of differing visions. And we have diplomatic

relations, if I remember correctly, with Syria. Is that correct?

And I think you went over there to work with

this government to put reforms in place. And by the way, there was

a controversy over you being there. I very much supported you

going and doing that. I thought that was an intelligent thing for

us to do. But we have diplomatic relations. We are working on reforms,

and they obviously have done some really, really terrible

things and are brutal and obviously are not the kind of government

we want to see pervasive around the world.

But the fact is that this is not exactly a democracy movement in

Syria right now. I mean, there are some people who are espousing

that. You are talking about the people who are organizing, but the

people fighting, from what I understand, are fighting for power in

government. They are not fighting under the banner of democracy,

as was laid out by Mr. Feltman, at least by our intelligence community anyway.

Who would be in power, by the way? I mean,

I think it is pretty interesting. If Bashar was gone, who would be

the person that was leading the country there? I mean, who is it

we are supporting, if you will, morally at least?

Do you think it is in our national interest—and

I will close with this—to be involved in military operations, arming

operations to going in with al-Qaeda and Hamas and others and

certainly the folks that are on the ground, the opposition groups,

to overthrow this government?

Listen, thank you, and I appreciate you laying

out the tremendous complexities and competing forces and the lack

of knowledge of even what this is really all about. And hopefully

over time, we will understand that more fully and I am sure you

will play a role in that. Thank you.