Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for having this

hearing and the witnesses for being here.

Dr. Wittes, I appreciated your comment about stability is in our

national interest in Syria. And that is counter to saying regime

change. I mean, that is a very different thing. I just would like to

ask all three of you for a brief response, not long. I have some other

questions. But is it in our national interest that we have stability

or is it in our national interest that we have regime change?

Well, I appreciate that.

As I listen in the hallways and talk with other Senators and as

we attend briefings together, you get a sense of sort of the tea

leaves and what people are beginning to think. I know the administration

is looking at a plan B. But one of the things that seems to

be in conversation—this is not necessarily my point of view at all,

but I think people are beginning to say, well, there are a couple

things that need to happen.

No. 1, there needs to be these zones or a zone, whether it is in

Turkey or whether it is inside of Syria, where at least the opposition

groups can train and have a place to organize.

The other piece is that we should be arming the opposition

groups because over time people are beginning to say, well, you

know, Syria is going to collapse because of sanctions, because of

other things, and what we need to do is give these opposition

groups time. Obviously, they are outmanned. Syria has a 330,000-

person army and the opposition group is small. But that seems to

be the drift. That is what I think the center focus is becoming, at

least in the United States Senate.

I would love for you all to respond to that. Obviously, the diplomatic

efforts would continue, but I think the arming of the rebels

is now becoming something that is more mainstream in thinking,

and I would love to have your response to that.

Dr. Wittes.

But they are not going to do that without us

being involved. If we keep going down the path of the armed rebels

base and just how that ends up—so for that to happen, our military

is going to be involved in some form or fashion. Arming rebels obviously

is the opposite of what Russia is now doing. They are arming

Syria. So play that out, if you will. You know, where does that go?

Because it would involve us having, I would think, some type of

boots on the ground or something else happening in that regard in

direct conflict to another P5 member.

So you would, though, support arming the opposition

groups, Americans, the U.S. Government being involved in

arming the opposition groups.