Thank you, Madam Chair.

My questions are for Secretary Sherman.

My understanding has always been that it is the policy of this

Nation not to negotiate with terrorists. I don’t know if you saw the

AP story today: U.S. offered Cuba swap for American. And I will

read briefly. It says the United States offered to let a convicted

Cuban spy return home in exchange for the release of an imprisoned

American, but Cuba rebuffed the offer, U.S. officials who

spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the

issue said. Says the Gross-Gonzalez swap—you mentioned Alan

Gross earlier—was raised by former New Mexico Governor Bill

Richardson as well as by senior U.S. officials in a series of meetings

with Cuban officials.

Richardson traveled to Cuba last month seeking Gross’ release.

He also told Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez that the U.S. would be willing to consider other areas of interest to Cuba.

Among them was removing Cuba from the U.S. list of state sponsors

of terrorism, reducing spending on Cuban democracy promotion

programs, authorizing U.S. companies to help clean up oil

spills from planned offshore drilling, improving postal exchanges,

and ending a program that make it easier for Cuban medical personnel

to defect to the United States.

So my question is a yes-or-no question. Has anyone in the

Obama administration discussed the possibility of making any concession

or accommodation whatsoever to the terrorist Castro dictatorship

in exchange for the release of American hostage Alan

Gross? Yes or no.

Has anyone talked about making an accommodation

to the Castro regime for the release of Alan Gross, any accommodation

whatsoever or concession? Are you telling me yes.

How recently?

How recently? I want it on the record in public here.

How recently?

Weeks, days, hours, months?

You are the Under Secretary for political affairs; is

that correct?

Days, weeks, months? When was this meeting?

Quite recently. Who authorized Bill Richardson to

make these offers to the Castro dictatorship?

Who interfaced with Bill Richardson before he went

to Cuba in your administration?

No, no. The administration confirmed on the record

that they knew Richardson was going, he was going as a private

citizen, but that he had had conversations with the administration

about his visit. Who did he interface with in the administration regarding

his visit to Cuba?

I need that answer. Who would have been responsible

for these discussions, recent discussions with the Castro dictatorship?

You don’t know who speaks to the Cuban Government

on behalf of our—on the Obama administration?

It is the policy of this administration not to negotiate

with terrorists?

And you recognize that Cuba has been designated

as a terrorist nation by our Government?

Well, in the last seconds that I have, I would just

tell you that this report is outrageous, that we would be negotiating

with a terrorist regime to release an American hostage, negotiating

with the same hostage takers that we have designated as

terrorists. I will yield back.