Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. It is always

a pleasure to be here. So thank you.

Ranking Member Berman, distinguished members of the committee,

I appreciate the invitation to appear before you today to

discuss our goals, our whole-of-government approach with regard to

Iran and Syria, and the strategy we are implementing to achieve

them.

Before I start, I would like to add my own dedication of this testimony

to Philo Dibble, who, as the chairwoman and Mr. Berman

said, passed away unexpectedly 2 weeks ago. He was a dedicated

Foreign Service Officer and was the heart of our Iran team, and

he is sorely missed.

Let me comment first, and briefly, on the conspiracy to assassinate

the Saudi Ambassador in Washington that was directed by

elements of the Iranian Government. As the Secretary and the

President have said, this plot was a flagrant violation of international

law and a dangerous escalation by Iran. I am deeply

grateful to our law enforcement and intelligence professionals who

probably saved the lives of scores of bystanders, along with the life

of an ambassador. The regime must be held accountable for its actions.

Just this week, as Under Secretary Cohen will explain, the administration

quickly designated five individuals, adding to a growing

list of sanctioned individuals and entities. We are hard at work,

meticulously and rationally laying out the facts of this plot. All

countries should deny Quds Force officers any platform to operate

within their territory and work with us even harder to enforce all

sanctions already on the books.

This administration is committed to addressing the continued

threat posed by the Iranian regime’s nuclear ambitions, its support

for international terrorism, its destabilizing activities in the region,

and its human rights abuses at home.

American policy regarding Iran remains unambiguous. First and

foremost, we must prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

Its illicit nuclear activity is one of the greatest global concerns our

country faces, and we will continue to increase the pressure, as the

President said yesterday, as long as the Iranian regime refuses to

engage the international community with seriousness or sincerity.

We now have the toughest sanctions package in three decades.

Since the passage of CISADA, we have imposed additional sanctions

on a growing list of individuals and entities responsible for

Iran’s expanding scope of unauthorized activities. These sanctions

have raised the cost, time, and energy required for Iran to pursue

its current course and provided a platform upon which the European

Union, Norway, Australia, Canada, South Korea, Switzerland,

and Japan implemented strict measures of their own.

In the aftermath of our calls on the conspiracy, as Secretary

Cohen will elaborate, the EU just today sanctioned Iran’s commercial

bank.

Using CISADA, we have designated eleven individuals and three

entities for human rights violations, and we continue to compile

more information. I appreciate, Congressman Ackerman, your list

and evidence that will allow us to identify more murderers, torturers,

and religious persecutors.

The second topic of this hearing is Syria, which depends more

and more on Iran for support as it becomes further isolated from

the international community. The Syrian regime has responded to

the calls for Assad to step aside with hollow promises of reform,

conspiracy theories, and escalating violence.

In its effort to cling to power, the regime is executing a deliberate

and bloody strategy of channeling peaceful protest into armed

insurrection. Its brutal actions have resulted in over 3,000 deaths

and many more thousands of cases of assault, arbitrary detention,

and torture since the unrest began in March.

The regime is also stroking the fears of Syria’s minority communities

with blatant propaganda.

Make no mistake, the regime is responsible for the cycle of violence

and sectarianism.

We have pursued targeted financial measures to increase pressure

on the Syrian regime and its corrupt business cronies. On August

18th, President Obama signed a new executive order that

blocks the property of the Syrian Government, bans U.S. persons

from new investments in or exporting services to Syria, and bans

U.S. imports of and other transactions or dealings in Syrian origin,

petroleum, or petroleum products. These are some of the strongest

sanctions the U.S. Government has imposed against any country in

the world.

Europe’s actions to ban the purchase of Syrian petroleum products,

the regime’s most important source of foreign exchange, will

have a significant impact.

Actions by the United States and the world community to

counter Iran and Syria’s domestic, regional, and international belligerency

are unmistakably escalating the cost of doing business as

usual for both countries. Their leaders must stop attacking their

populations, undermining regional security, and threatening international

security. Their actions run counter to the aspirations and

hopes of their people and their neighbors.

In my new role as Under Secretary for Political Affairs, I look

forward to continuing to work closely and transparently with members

of this committee and with the entire Congress. Thank you

very much.

Thank you very much for your questions, Madam

Chair.

The administration is very clear. Our policy toward Iran is to get

them to verifiably end their nuclear weapons program and their

nuclear weapons ambition. There is no question about that, and we

are quite unambiguous about that objective.

There has been a two-pronged approach to that objective and

they interact with each other. We want to create the maximum

pressure on Iran. To do so, we not only need to impose, which we

have, the strongest sanctions regime in three decades bilaterally

against Iran, but we need to mobilize the international community.

Because sanctions are most effective when they are severe, when

they are enforced, and when they are taken forward by multiple

countries.

We are very powerful, and we are very strong, and we are very

consequential to Iran, but when we have a United Nations Security

Council resolution signed on to by the entire Security Council and

they bilaterally move forward in enforcing those sanctions, we increase

the severity and the impact of sanctions. It is always good

for us to do it. It is even better when we have others do it with

us.

We are absolutely committed to following through

on the enforcement of all of our sanctions, and I will get to that

in a moment.

So we have one track which is sanctions and increasing the pressure

on Iran and doing that in every single possible way that we

can, and we are greatly appreciative of CISADA as an incredibly

useful tool in doing that.

The second prong is, rather than engagement, I would say seeing

in fact whether there is an on ramp to having a discussion with

Iran to actually end their nuclear weapons program.

So far, the answer has been no.

Iran has not been serious. Iran has not been sincere.

And, in fact, right after I was confirmed, I went up to the

United Nations General Assembly, had a meeting with the P5+1,

and I want to read to you and this was

May I add one sentence, Madam Chair?

The one sentence I would add is, out of that P5+1 meeting, all

of us agreed that there should be no conversation with Iran unless

there is any seriousness and there is a way to verify that seriousness.

So we agree with you.

Thank you, Congressman.

As you know, we have articulated very strong opposition to this

legislation and our deep concerns about the impact. As Secretary

Clinton pointed out, restricting U.S. participation and withholding

50 percent of U.S.-assessed contributions absent a shift of voluntary

funding would have severely undercut our ability to stop

nuclear nonproliferation, combat terrorism, and fully implement

the U.N. sanctions on Iran.

As you know, it would mean that we would have to curtail our

work with the Sanctions Committee, with the Panel of Experts,

that the IAEA would be unfunded to an extent that they would not

be able to carry out what we are all trying to achieve, that, in fact,

all of the critical tools that we use to monitor, to verify, to in fact

do exactly as the chairwoman suggested, make sure that Iran does

not have a nuclear weapons program, would be severely hampered.

Thank you very much for that very important

question.

We do in fact have programs in place that do training and offer

technologies that might help the people of Iran escape the repression

and the lack of access to exactly the Internet and the programs

that you suggest.

I, unfortunately, need to say, Congressman, that I would be glad

to discuss this further in another setting. Because, given the repressive

nature of the Iranian regime, further discussion in this

setting would put people at risk.

As Secretary Cohen articulated, we are indeed

looking at that. And, as he pointed out, we already have cut off all

U.S. connections and relationships with the central bank; and the

question is whether we can do so in a way internationally that we

can sustain.

If I may, Congressman, I think a couple of points.

One, as the Under Secretary said, we absolutely share your sense

of urgency and that time is not on our side. We get that.

We have talked with the Saudis. They have put

out a rather robust statement of holding the Iranian Government

accountable for these actions. We have from the President, the Secretary

Well, no, because what we are trying to do is—

as you said, we have undertaken a number of sanctions. And I

looked briefly at your suggestions, which I think are excellent and

also gives us a whole sector to pay attention to, which I think we

probably need to pay more attention to than we have, so we thank

you very much for that suggestion.

But I think what we need to do is to get every single country we

can to imagine exactly what you said, Congressman, what would

have happened if this had been successful? And once you think

about that, you, Country X, ought to enforce all of the sanctions

that we have put on the table. You ought to make sure the Qods

force cannot operate in your country. You ought to make sure that

high-level visits don’t occur. There has to be international pressure.

If I may, let me speak very briefly and turn it to

Under Secretary Cohen.

I understand and we share your frustration that more progress

has not been achieved. But, in fact, the incredibly robust sanctions

have only been in place for a very short period of time in the history

of sanctions imposition. And indeed it was not until this administration

that we had the most extensive, deepest, most multilateral

sanctions ever imposed on Iran ever; and indeed it has

begun to have some bite. It has hurt their economy. Stopping

transshipment has meant they cannot procure some of the elements

they need for their nuclear weapons program

It has—a number of things we have done have

slowed—although they have moved forward, they have not moved

forward at the pace at which they had hoped to.

I don’t disagree with you, Congressman, that we would like to

have made more progress. We don’t disagree with you that time is

not on our side. As the President said yesterday, we are looking to

increase even further the efforts that we are taking for Iran to be

held accountable for what it has done here, particularly in the

wake of this conspiracy to assassinate the Saudi Ambassador. But

this is a very difficult problem; and the options on the table, all of

which are on the table, are difficult.

Thank you, Congressman. Again, I will turn to

Secretary Cohen in a moment.

One thing I would say, besides some of the legislation that you

have put on the table like CISADA, which was incredibly useful,

and I think Congressman Ackerman may have come up with a sector

we should take a look at in a way, quite frankly, we should not

unfund the U.N., because we need the oversight bodies to be able

to know where facilities are, to monitor what is going on, to be able

to act when we need to act.

Secondly, I would say

I understand that it doesn’t do everything we

want them to do, but the IAEA has been a valuable tool in our ability

to stop nuclear proliferation.

Similarly, I would say we need a budget that allows us to do the

kind of programming that Congressman Royce raised around how

we, in fact, help get Internet tools to people in repressive societies.

No, I am saying that

I understand that frustration, Congressman. I

was suggesting—we did that yesterday—I was suggesting some

tools that would be useful to us.

I quite agree with you that what the fundamental policy must be

is to increase the pressure on Iran and to get them to eliminate

their nuclear weapons program. And, as I said earlier and Secretary

Cohen has said, we have the most extensive, the most robust

set of sanctions, and we welcome the ongoing discussion with

Congress around CBI and about other sectors that we can attack

to solve this problem.

. Congressman Deutch, as you know, this administration

shares your deep concern, and we will leave no stone

unturned. Shortly after I became Under Secretary, I called Mrs.

Levinson to talk to her personally to let her know that I would persevere

as much as my predecessor did.

And I know this morning there is an AP report about a recent

meeting between U.S. officials and the Cubans. And we have always

said we would use all diplomatic channels to try to get Alan

Gross home. We continue to call on the Cuban Government to release

Mr. Gross on humanitarian grounds and to allow him to return

to his family and bring to an end the long ordeal that began

well over 11 ⁄2 years ago. And I can confirm that such a meeting

took place.

Absolutely. I am sorry. I was talking about Mr.

Gross and conflated the two. My apologies. Let me be clear. On

both cases, Mr. Gross in Cuba, Mr. Levinson in Iran, we are doing

everything we can with every channel we have.

We share the concern, particularly about what

China is doing in the energy sector. The President, the Vice President,

and the Secretary have all raised this directly with the Chinese.

We have, in fact, designated one Chinese company under

INKSNA for its activities regarding foreign persons that are helping

on WMD.

But, as you said, it appears that the interventions at the highest

levels to get them to slow down existing activities, not conclude

new deals and not to backfill is producing some progress. The Secretary

is continuing to look at this.

Absolutely.

Well, Congressman, I think that everything that

Iran has said to date has not been particularly useful, to say the

least.

Indeed, Iran’s response to this plot that we recently

uncovered and disrupted was to basically call it a fantasy.

If wanting to bomb the Saudi Ambassador on U.S. soil and also kill

a group of innocent bystanders is fantasy, then obviously Iran in

a different world. And I think that everyone on this committee

would agree that they do, and it is why the chair and the ranking

called this hearing today. Because, indeed, I would quite agree with

you. What they say has no weight to it so far as we proceed forward.

We know, Congressman, through a variety of

means that in fact what we are doing has had an impact, that, in

fact, it has created problems in their economy. It has created some

dissension within their government. It has put the screws to what

they are trying to do. But there is no doubt there is a considerable

path to go yet to get them to eliminate their nuclear weapons ambitions.

Congressman, thank you very much, and thank

you for your leadership along with the chair and the other members

of this committee on bringing forth the Syria Accountability

Act.

The administration has implemented almost all of the sanctions

listed in that Act. I can walk through all of the things that have

occurred.

Most recently, as you know, on August 18th, the President

signed an executive order, 13582, blocking the property of the Syrian

Government, banning U.S. persons from new investments in or

exporting services to Syria, banning U.S. imports of and other

transactions or dealings in Syrian-origin petroleum and petroleum

products, therefore fulfilling all of the rest of the sanctions.

We have also imposed travel restrictions on the Syrian Embassy

and followed through on the other elements of the Syrian Accountability

Act. So we think you have given us a tool that is allowing

us to impose really extraordinary sanctions on Syria, and we are grateful.

At the moment, we are busy, since this is a relatively new instrument,

fulfilling all of these, executing on all the sanctions that are

possible under it. So, right now, I think we have the tools that we

need. I would let David add anything he would like to add.

Congressman, I think, going to the end of your

comment, we would agree. In fact, one of the premises of this hearing

is the tremendous interaction between what is happening in

Iran and what is happening in Syria, and that Syria has really

turned to Iran more and more as the only support it has as it has

gotten further isolated from the international community, just as

you have described.

And so, a change in leadership and an opening to all of the people

of Syria who want change would in fact have an impact on Iran

to further isolate it as standing by itself and no longer having it

as easily to, as you say, interject itself not only into Lebanon but

to be a destabilizing factor throughout the region. So we quite

agree with you.

As for the opposition, we are and I think Ambassador Ford has

done a superb job trying to meet with everyone and to understand

who all the characters are. And I don’t think we know yet how all

of this will form.

The administration has a policy to eliminate

Iran’s nuclear weapons program and ambitions, to stop its international

terrorism, to stop its destabilization

I think what we have seen throughout the Arab

spring is that, and in the situation in Syria, is when people themselves

make choices about what they want for their future the

international community should support people in that effort. But

it is up to the people of Iran.

I think we would support the people of Iran having

the same freedoms all the rest of us have.

It is exactly what I said, Congressman, which is

we support the aspirations of the Iranian people.

There is a lot of discussion about what that timing

might be, and it is certainly not a good sign that they have declared that they have moved to 20 percent enrichment, and they

have moved some of their centrifuge capabilities to what was a previously

covert center at Qom. But I couldn’t give you today in this

setting an assessment but would be glad to have a separate briefing

to get the Intelligence Community’s best estimate of that.

The President said yesterday, Congressman, that

he wants to ensure that we have the strongest response toward

this latest horrific act by Iran. We are working assiduously to make

real that commitment that he stated yesterday. And we will be

doing everything we can, and have been from the President on

down, to try to move in that direction some of those things have

been discussed here today, but there are others in consideration.

And, as the President has also said, every option in circumstances

like this always remain under consideration.

Thank you, Congressman, and thank you for your

good wishes. I appreciate it.

I think we were all heartened when we saw the Green movement

emerge in Iran some time ago and deeply saddened when we have

seen the tremendous repression to try to squash any ability of an

opposition to form. At the same time, I think we all believe that

the aspirations of the Iranian people are to have the same freedoms

that the rest of us do.

And in response to Congressman Royce’s question earlier today,

the government—we have quite an extensive program to try to ensure

that information can reach the Iranian people, that they have

the technology to have access to that information. There are other

things that we can do to be helpful in supporting the aspirations

of the Iranian people, and we would be glad to give you a more detailed

understanding of that in a different setting. Given the repressive

nature of the government, we are limited in what we can

say here.

We have not stopped that effort, as you indicate,

Congressman. And indeed, as Secretary Cohen said earlier today,

today the European Union—and I had misspoke, I said the Commercial

Bank of Iran, and I meant to say the Commercial Bank of

Syria—they designated the Commercial Bank. And, obviously, the

EU’s earlier sanction of stopping petroleum—oil and gas between

Europe and Syria was quite crucial because it is an important market.

So the European Union, which has much greater ties to Syria

than the United States has had for some time, probably can be

more effective on the sanctions front than even we can be, though

we continue to use the Syria Accountability Act to fulfill all of the

tools that you all have provided to us.

I think today also the head of the Human Rights Commission

has indicated that there really is a tremendous effort under way

by the Syrian Government to repress and kill and persecute all of

its citizens and really calls on the international community to take

urgent action to stop such things. So we will see what the response

is to that as well.

We have continued conversations with them to try

to address their concerns. But my sense, Congressman, is we need

to proceed to mobilize those who are ready to act while we try to

bring Russia and China around.

Okay. I will be concise, and if I may defer to my

colleague.

We see the Qods force as a very serious part and

becoming probably a stronger and stronger part of the Iranian Government

and taking over a lot of the economic sector of the Iranian

Government and also really directing all of its international terrorism.

We agree.

We have—in fact, as Secretary Cohen outlined, we

have sanctioned the IRGC in a number of instances. And I would

remind all of us that Iran is already designated as a state sponsor

of terrorism, and the sanctions that are imposed as a result of that

are more profound than any other individual set of sanctions that

we have. So we have made a very clear declaration to the Iranian

Government that the IRGC and the Qods force, which is a part of

it, are in fact very tangible directors of all that is wrong with Iran.

We have also, as I said in my opening statement, as part of the

follow on and to intensify that activity have been asking governments

in reaction to this assassination attempt as well as to previous

behavior, to not allow the Qods force to operate in their country.

What I can say, Congressman, is that, as I did

earlier, even though I conflated two things, I can confirm that a

meeting between U.S. officials and the Cubans did take place as

part of our efforts to get Alan Gross home. I cannot comment on

what was said in that meeting. But I can say to you, Congressman,

that we have laws and restrictions, and we will obey and follow

those laws and restrictions.

All I am saying, Congressman, is I can confirm

that a meeting did take place recently between U.S. officials and

the Cubans. I cannot comment

Ms. SHERMAN . On the content of that, but I would

be glad to get back to you with any further information.

I don’t know the exact date, but it was quite recent.

I don’t know.

That is correct.

Quite recent.

I don’t know that anyone authorized Governor

Richardson to make such a trip or to make such concessions.

I don’t know that anybody did. It was before I became

Under Secretary, but I would be glad to check with

I don’t know that answer, but I will be glad to get

it for you, Congressman, very specifically.

I don’t know that answer either, but I will get it

for you, Congressman.

Congressman, you know, I don’t usually use as an

excuse that I am brand new and recent to this job, but in this case

unfortunately I have to. I have only been in the job less than 3

weeks. So I will get that answer for you and I will get it to you

promptly.

Of course.

Yes.

Congressman, I am going to defer in a moment to

Under Secretary Cohen, since we have just designated Mahan Air

in the last day. But indeed, previously we did feel it was a responsibility

and we may continue to for civilian air safety, that we not

allow planes to fly where people might die.

Congressman, we certainly want to follow through

on the law as it has been executed by you all and signed by the

President, and I will come back to you with further information on

that.

I understand your concern.

I understand, sir.

There have been, in fact, a number of sanctions,

if I may, let Under Secretary Cohen speak to this issue.

Thank you.

As you point out, Congressman, the most extreme

is one that I think none of us want to see, though the President

has said in instances like this, we always leave all options on the

table and that is true here. None of us want and hope to go there.

Short of that, international isolation of the most extreme variety is

probably what has the most impact on any country and that means

their inability to have economic means, their ability to operate in

the world, their ability to move in the world, their ability to be recognized

in the world, their ability to function in the world. And

with the help of CISADA and other Acts that Congress has passed

and executive orders that the President has put in place, we now

have the most robust set of sanctions on Iran in the last three decades.

That does not mean we have designated everybody who can

be designated, nor sanctioned everyone who can be sanctioned, nor

gotten all of the world to do likewise, but that is what we are attempting

to do. And if I may defer to my colleague to add to that.

I am sorry. I didn’t hear you, sir. What do I want

to see?

What we would like to see as Under Secretary

Cohen said is we would like to see every other country in the world

take the kinds of actions that we have to isolate Iran. We have

begun to see that happening. We think an enormous amount more

can be done. And over weeks and months before I got this job, and

even in a more accelerated pace since this latest horrific plot to assassinate

the Saudi Ambassador, we have spoken from the President

on down to every single capital in the world in the last 48

hours, every single capital in the world has been touched to, in

fact, say this is, as the Under Secretary said, this is one more proof

point in why you should take immediate action to not only condemn

this act, but to, in fact, keep any Quds Force from operating

in your country, look at enforcing all sanctions.

Ms.