Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, I greatly appreciate your testimony, clearness in an

area in which there is not always clarity. I believe we—I think we

would all like Asad to steer a course to the middle. If we could get

there that would be great. My question is how we get there, and

I think first we have got to look at how they act or how they are

acting.

Clearly, in the buildup to Operation Iraqi Freedom and your testimony,

Secretary Burns, illicit oil trade, illicit transshipment of

dual use and military-related items, I think night goggles that

were used to kill our soldiers potentially, and today very clearly

Syria being involved in supporting Hamas and Hizballah and a

whole range of terrorist organizations that kill people; and as I

read the testimony, not just in terms of sometimes a physical presence,

but operationally. It seems that this is an operational center

for folks that are out there undermining the peace process, taking

lives.

So the question is how do you impact that? It appears to me that

this, quote, ‘‘pragmatic’’ formula is that the stronger we are, the

more likely they will be to perhaps steer a middle. But it does not

seem like it is because there is a desire to steer a middle. It does

not seem like because there is an interest in it. It is because if we

are strong all of a sudden they may stop doing what they are doing

and have been doing for a long time, which is supporting terrorism.

Are there—help me understand if that is it. It almost seems as

if they kind of play with two hands: On the one hand they take

some actions regarding al-Qaeda and when it looked like we were

plowing through Iraq those seemed to be substantive actions; and

at the same time, it is like somebody picking your pocket, in this

case I think more than picking your pocket, I think clubbing you

over the head with support of terrorism.

Other than being strong, in which we force somebody to simply

do the right thing, are there other things that we can do vis a vis

with Syria? How do you deal with a nation like this beyond just

simply being stronger than they would like you to be?

I appreciate that. I would note in particular

with other partners. If other partners came to us and said Asad is

trying to steer towards the middle, go back and tell them: Well, tell

him to stop supporting Hizballah because they are going to try to

kill us, stop supporting Hamas because they are undermining the

possibility of peace in the Middle East. And to Abdullah, who has

been a good ally and somebody I believe we can trust, the same

message, though: Deliver the message to the Syrians that if there

is to be peace they have got to be part of the process and they have

got to be part of the solution, not, as we used to say in the sixties,

simply part of the problem.

You have a difficult job in a difficult area of

the world, and I appreciate the work that you do.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.