Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for

the invitation to speak to the committee. My statement has been

submitted for the record. I will only touch on its highlights.

Syria has been a perennial source of frustration for successive

American administrations, which have nonetheless seen fit to stay

in as close touch as possible, knowing that Damascus could play a

key role in a general Arab-Israeli peace process. There is a great

deal of mutual frustration and our meeting today takes place at a

time when there is regrettably little prospect for forward movement

on the Arab-Israeli peace process.

Syria nonetheless, as Dr. Clawson said, it is sensitive to statements

by American leaders and it very much values continued dialogue

with the United States. It would, I know, welcome a renewed

peace process.

But our dialogue is so often the dialogue of the deaf. We see

Syria as unresponsive to our demands that it curb terrorism. Syria

considers that our Middle East policy is so biased towards Israel

that we blur any distinction between actions of terrorists and those

engaged in acts of national resistance. They would cooperate with

us on al-Qaeda, but not on Palestinian terrorists or not on the Lebanese

Hizballah.

Second, they complain that we play down how insecure Syria and

others feel in the Arab world when facing Israel, the region’s superpower.

While its negotiating approach is influenced, of course, by the

history of its dismemberment, that is the territorial losses it suffered

between the two world wars at the hands of Britain and

France, it partially explains its longstanding conviction that Israel

itself was established as part of the game of imperialism to divide

the Arabs. In its view Israel remains expansionist and it argues

that a general Middle East peace could have been achieved long

ago had the Arabs only stuck together.

Well, this year—Ambassador Burns talked about the accumulation

of frustrations—our frustration, our irritation, blew up over

events connected with Iraq and the war. The administration’s withdrawal

of its earlier objections to the Syria Accountability Act is

one of the tangible signs of this current attitude. The new problems

were over issues of military supplies reaching Iraq from Syria before

the war and its presumed encouragement of fighters crossing

the border since the war to target our troops. Intelligence is apparently

mixed both on this latter issue and whether Syria received

stocks of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction before the war.

Now, the President has disavowed any intent to invade Syria,

but Syria is frequently described as on the wrong side of terrorism,

and there is certainly an appetite for regime change in some quarters

of this administration. The removal of the Saddam Hussein regime

was actually a political plus for Damascus, eliminating a rival

to its leadership claims in the Arab east, but a major economic loss

in terms of the benefits received from discounted Iraqi oil.

What can Syria do to redirect its policies offensive to the United

States? Certainly the list would include improving their border con-

trols, avoiding encouragement of fighters seeking to transit Syria

for Iraq, better control over both extremist Palestinian organizations,

including expelling their leaders, and ensuring that

Hizballah does not trigger a major conflict with Israel. I think the

Syrian leadership has been in part constrained by the presence of

400,000 Palestinians in Syria in how they treat their leaders.

What should be our policy direction? First and foremost would be

to find a way to revive the peace process. Syrian anxiety at being

overlooked tempts it to tolerate and perhaps even encourage the

acts of Palestinian extremists and Hizballah.

Second, I would like to suggest a different way of dealing with

Syrian weapons of mass destruction programs. Their extent I do

not know. Certainly their chemical program has been talked of for

20 years—nothing new. But I suggest that we go beyond our rhetorical

support for a Middle East region free of weapons of mass

destruction to launch actual negotiations for a regional approach to

their control. Our current policy is to pursue controls on a state by

state basis, but excluding Israel. We have tended to assume that

Israel would fiercely oppose a regional approach, preferring to

avoid any discussion of its arsenal of weapons of mass destruction.

I think it is time to reexamine this in the light of what caught

my attention in a recent article in the Los Angeles Times, that

Israel was considering placing nuclear-tipped warheads on its missiles

in its submarines. Now, the sources were anonymous, easily

deniable, and they were quickly denied. But they provide a tantalizing

hint that Israel just might be ready to use awareness of its

arsenal in a new way.

Could this mean that it might be prepared to go beyond the position

of Prime Minister Rabin in the mid-nineties, that Israel would

sign the NPT 2 years after a regional peace had been achieved one

that would include more than the Arab world? Verification procedures

for a regional free zone would have to meet the most demanding

standards. Additional U.S. bilateral guarantees of Israeli

security would probably be required.

I have offered this suggestion believing that any approach that

might restrain the rush throughout the region—and we have been

worried sick ever since it started in South Asia and moved west—

to acquire nuclear, chemical, and biological warfare capabilities

should be explored. The risk of a broader conflict must always be

in the minds of our policymakers. Israel’s October 5 attack on the

terrorist training center in Syria was warning that further actions

could come and the problem could escalate. And a regional approach

to arms control could also help rebuild our credentials as a

dependable, fair-minded mediator in the Middle East.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just a brief comment, Mr. Chairman. I

hear Senator Biden virtually saying that he cannot foresee any way

that Hamas and Jihad can ever change. Well, I do.

Well, you have asked if we are smoking

something. No, it is Federal premises; we are not smoking; we are

trying to clear that air. The fact is, I look at Avigdor Liberman sitting

on the opposition bench in the Knesset; now actually in the

cabinet, who has had a lifelong commitment to the expulsion of

every last Palestinian from Israel. I foresee a day when there is a

peace agreement with the Palestinians.

I am comparing his absolute view that that

is the only solution for Israel with the Hamas view that Israel

should not exist.

One day there will be a Palestinian parliament,

Hamas and Islamic Jihad will be in opposition, but there

will be peace. And I agree there will only be peace if the Palestinian

leadership and countries like Syria exert the control to keep

them from doing more than making speeches on the opposition

bench.

Today there is—look closely also at the

Hizballah situation. Where does the operetta continue? On that

tiny section of the Lebanese-Israeli border of the Shabah Farms. It

is not raging up and down the Lebanese-Israeli frontier.

Is it self-control of—

I do not know.

I think it is a combination of Syrian

pressure—

I think it is also perhaps Hizballah’s own

interests within the Lebanese political world.

Iran, I do not know. Do you have a view

on Iran’s role?