I want the ranking member, Senator

Lugar, to know I’m here temporarily.

Senator Biden will be back shortly.

I’ll exercise my own prerogative, as a temporary Chair, to start

my questions now. I don’t see anyone outranking me over here.

Secretary Burns, thank you for being here, and thank you for

your great public service, especially when it comes to the threat

posed by Iran. And I appreciate the testimony you gave.

I wanted to ask you a couple of questions about intelligence. I

think you’d agree with me, wouldn’t you, that when we’re talking

about any kind of successful effort in the area of diplomacy, that

one of the underpinnings of that, one of the foundations of that, or,

to use another analogy, one of the pillars to hold that up, would

be a credible and an effective set of intelligence data? And there

have been questions—we know the questions that were raised, serious

questions about intelligence failures in the lead-up to the war

in Iraq. And, just in February, a Los Angeles Times story calling

into question U.S. intelligence as shared with U.N. nuclear watch—

the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency, IAEA—the assertion made by

diplomats—and this story was out of Vienna—is that that intelligence

was inaccurate, and serious questions raised about it. So,

I ask you, Do you have full confidence that the intelligence that our

Government is producing with regard to Iran, generally, but, specifically,

the nuclear threat, and the detail and the data that

undergirds those intelligence conclusions or estimates—do you

have full confidence in American intelligence efforts in this question?

And based upon your answer, from what you can

tell us that’s not—obviously, not classified—what has our intelligence

indicated to us, in terms of the duration of time from the

present until—we hope this doesn’t come to pass, but sometime in

the future, where Iran could, in fact, develop a nuclear weapon?

There are all kinds of estimates that are on the record. There are

all kinds of opinions. But from what you know today, and based

upon our intelligence, what can you tell us about that?

My time is short. I just want to try to get one

or two more in.

The whole question of refining capacity, we know that’s the ability

of the Iranians to have the consumption of gasoline at a level

where they can sustain their economy. I know that’s an advantage

we have, I guess, in terms of negotiations. But, because of their

lack of domestic refining capacity, what can you tell us about strategies

that we might employ, because of that disadvantage that they

have, in terms of short-term or long-term negotiations? Is that

something—do you think it’s viable as a point of leverage? And is

this something that you’ve already employed or begun to think

about?

Thank you. I’m out of time.

Senator Feingold.

Senator Coleman.

Senator Obama.

Senator Webb.