Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Secretary, welcome. As you noted, you have had, over the course

of the last few years, many discussions with a number of us on this

committee about this issue. Most of those have been off the record,

and we have always noted, and appreciated, your candid exchanges.

And I share Chairman Biden’s appreciation of your abilities

and leadership, as well as what Senator Lugar said.

I also wish to associate myself with both Senator Lugar’s comments

and Chairman Biden’s, in—of putting a focus on the efforts

with the NGOs, as you noted, widening our exchange efforts. As

you noted, we have some opportunities here with the younger generation

in Iran, and you and I have talked about that, at some

length. You also appeared before the Senate Banking Committee,

2 weeks ago, on this issue, and we appreciated your comments

then.

And I also would like to acknowledge the efforts that Secretary

Rice is making, as well as yours and others in the State Department,

to what I perceive to be a refocusing of our priorities using

some new diplomatic initiatives. It is my opinion that that is going

to be the most important leverage we have within the arc of our

instruments of power—military, economic, and diplomatic—and a

wise use of each in a coordinated, comprehensive way is what’s

going to be required. And I believe that you and Secretary Rice and

others are focused on that. And you should be recognized for that.

And I think it’s important that Congress acknowledge that.

You know, Secretary Burns, that this week the Senate has been

consumed with Iraq, specifically the supplemental appropriations

request from the President. And, as you have noted, as others

have, we cannot separate Iraq from Iran; they are woven into the

same fabric, as is the Middle East, in general; specifically, Israel,

the Palestinian issue. And it is, in my opinion, not only appropriate

and responsible to have this debate and have the Congress involved,

but it’s essential. And, as we look at the papers this morning,

strikes in Baghdad’s Green Zone increased; 6 of the last 7

days, rockets have hit inside the Green Zone, killed one America

soldier, wounded another, contractors. Papers continue to be full of

other headlines, like, ‘‘Gunmen Go On a Rampage in Iraqi City.’’

This is Tal Afar, policemen loose on the streets, assassinating people.

This is the same city that President Bush talked about as a

model city, how peace, tranquility had come to Tal Afar. The President

said, ‘‘It gives me confidence in our strategy.’’ Other headlines

about what the King of Saudi Arabia said, calling the United

States involvement in Iraq—I believe his exact quote was ‘‘an illegitimate

occupation of Iraq.’’ And then, on the same page, headline,

‘‘Iran May Skip Talks on Iraq if U.S. Keeps Six Detainees.’’ You

have addressed that issue, generally.

Now, with all of that playing out—and that, Mr. Secretary, is reality;

that’s not an abstraction, that’s not a political statement, that

is reality as to what’s happening in Iraq. And we can have all the

verbiage about supporting our troops and all the other debate

points that have been made, but what I have just inventoried here,

and we could continue for some time, are realities. Things aren’t

getting better, they’re getting worse.

Now, in Iraq, as you have noted, the Iranians have considerable

influence. Let’s start with the fact that the Iraqi Prime Minister

and the Shia senior Government of Iraq, our allies, our friends,

those we helped put in office, are closely associated with the Ira-

nians. You and I have talked about this. Most were exiled in Iran

during the reign of Saddam Hussein. And my question is: Does this

enhance, does this inhibit—how does it factor into our relationship

with Iran, what we are attempting to do with Iran through the

United Nations, through our partners—and all the pieces, not just

the nuclear piece, but the Hezbollah piece? Are we working with

the Iranians and Iraqis together? Are we working with our allies,

the Iraqis? The Iraqis are in and out of Tehran in a fairly regular

interval. How are we using that relationship, or are we using that

relationship, between the Iraqi Government and the Iranian Government?

Thank you.

Part of the question revolved around whether

the Iraqi Government was attempting to use this—or, how were

they attempting to use their relationship with the Iranians in Iraq.

Not just us. And if—in fact, as I understand it, the Secretary says

that unless there is a verifiable suspension in Iran’s enrichment

program, then she will not go to the ministerial meeting. Is that

correct?

So, the Secretary would, in fact, would go to a

ministerial including the Iranians, without a verifiable enrichment

agreement or suspension commitment from the Iranians.

So, she would.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairman.