Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I join

you in welcoming our distinguished guests. They are both very dear

friends personally, as well as very good friends of this committee

through their faithful testimony throughout the years. They’ve

been generous with their time and counsel on foreign policy issues

in the past and we look forward to their views today on Iran.

On Tuesday, as you pointed out, the committee heard testimony

from four distinguished foreign policy experts, and they provided

helpful analysis of the policy options available to the United States

in responding to threats posed by Iran. The United States agenda

with Iran involves numerous issues, including the nuclear program,

support for terrorist organizations, its relevance to our efforts in

Iraq and Afghanistan, its threat to the security of Israel, its impact

on stability in the Persian Gulf region, its status as an energy exporter,

its relationship with Shiite communities in the Middle East,

and prospects for long-term improvements in the United States-Iranian

relationship.

Although all of these issues are interconnected, concerns about

Iran’s nuclear program have understandably dominated discourse,

given the risks and the consequences of proliferation and the uncertain

status of Iran’s nuclear program. Potential leverage stemming

from the economic stress on Iran caused by the drop of world

oil prices and the fresh start provided by the Obama government

also contribute to the sense that the time is ripe for a concerted

multilateral effort to constrain Iran’s nuclear program.

Our hearing on Tuesday provided an opportunity to examine

such questions as whether the Iranian Government can be induced

to limit its nuclear program, what set of multilateral sanctions and

incentives might achieve this goal, and whether success would likely

require recognition of a limited Iranian right to enrich. There

was broad agreement that restraining Iran’s nuclear ambitions

would require greater cooperation with allies and partners, most of

whom have commercial interests with Iran and independent views

about the Teheran regime.

This leads to such questions as what compromises should we be

willing to make in our approach to Iran to ensure a tightly unified

coalition, and should the United States make explicit to the Chinese

and to the Russians that cooperation on Iran is at the very

top of our agenda with those nations.

Beyond Iran’s nuclear program, the United States Government

should also be preparing a strategy for engaging Iran on other

issues, and such engagement should not undercut multilateral efforts

on the nuclear question. Rather, it should seek to establish

communications that can avoid miscalculation, open up the possibility

of cooperation on points of agreement, and facilitate information

flowing to the Iranian people.

Last year when Under Secretary of State Bill Burns joined representatives

of the other P5+1 governments in a meeting with the

Iranian nuclear negotiator, it signaled a shift in United States policy.

But we still have not established a clear course of action on bilateral

engagement, and some suggest the first step should be a

low-level meeting between United States and Iranian officials that

would set the parameters for future discussions. Others argue that

a public, top-down approach that clarifies ambiguities and sets the

context for subsequent discussions is preferable.

Both Dr. Brzezinski and General Scowcroft have deep experience

in constructing these types of strategies. I am hopeful they will

offer thoughts about how a potential United States-Iranian dialog

could begin and how it should be structured.

Last, I would ask our witnesses to comment on the advisability

and timing of opening a United States visa office or interest section

in Iran. I support establishing a modest diplomatic presence in

Iran. Such an outpost would facilitate more exchange and outreach

with the Iranian people and improve our ability to interpret what

is going on in that country.

I thank the Chairman again for this hearing and I look forward

to today’s testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Brzezinski, earlier in your testimony you

mentioned a point that one of our witnesses on Tuesday also mentioned,

and that is that the Supreme Ruler is the major factor,

major leader in Iran, as opposed to Ahmadinejad. I want to pursue

that for just a moment, to ask you and General Scowcroft. In your

judgment, does the Supreme Ruler really want to have a relationship

with us, that is the United States, or, more broadly, with the

West? Or does the Supreme Ruler believe that his security, regime,

and authority is based upon not having such a relationship?

What is your judgment about his preference or his security in

this situation?

But even if public opinion in Iran is in favor of

negotiating with the United States, does it make any difference? In

other words, if this is a theocratic regime of the Supreme Leader,

leaving aside whatever Ahmadinejad’s situation is, my basic question

is, should our negotiating posture be one of focusing on the Supreme

Ruler? Is he inclined to want to negotiate, or is his position

one in which he sees security by not doing so?

General Scowcroft, do you have a comment on

this subject?

The reason I ask is, just being the devil’s advocate

for a moment, the election may be very interesting and quite

competitive and we are extremely interested in its outcome. But I

want to return to the point that despite all of the debate and interest,

if down deep the Supreme Ruler feels that the regime needs

to retain, if not hostility to us and to the West, at least no particular

accommodation, and that a nuclear program is a part of

that situation what are the real prospects for an agreement. I am

focusing on this because we’ve had a lot of testimony that public

opinion is important, that we ought to have transparency as we formulate

our policy, transparency as we formulate relations with the

Europeans, and I think there’s logic to that, so that the Iranian

people see all of this, or anybody who is in Iran. But when it finally

comes down to it, even if they do see all of it, what authority do

they have or what ability to change the mind of the Supreme Ruler

or those who are closest to him in a theocracy that has a set pattern?

My time is up, but it would be interesting to pursue

how the Supreme Leader looks at the regional balance of

power, terrorism, economic picture, and Iran’s history. In other

words, there might be some reasons why the Supreme Leader could

come under some circumstances to a different view toward us.

Thank you very much.

The chairman has asked me to recognize Senator Feingold.

I just join you in thanking our witnesses.