Thank you, sir.

Mr. Chairman, Senator Lugar, gentlemen,

I’m, as my colleagues on the dais are here today, extremely pleased

to return to the committee and have a chance to engage with you

on this extraordinarily important subject.

Like my colleagues, I, too, will enter my written testimony for

the record and give you, instead, a brief summary of the principal

points I made, and address, in addition, the nuclear issue and its

effect on the region and the international community, the principal

focus of your hearing.

I’m going to start, however, roughly in the same direction that

Karim Sadjadpour just undertook to provide a political context, for

if we do not figure out exactly where we are and where we’re

headed, then engaging on the nuclear question is a much more

complicated exercise.

So, first, let me open with a core contention. Senator Kerry, it

matches your opening remarks. And that is, Iran is important, Iran

is dangerous, Iran is urgent, and we have no choice but to deal

with Iran, despite the negatives, for Iran is vitally important to the

region, it touches on every issue that we face in the Middle East,

and every interest of every one of our friends and allies. In short,

if we’re to make any progress with the questions we face in Iraq,

Afghanistan, over the nuclear question, energy issues, Israel, Palestine,

we have to be able to take Iran into account and deal with it.

I reached that conclusion over a decade ago, when I was sent to

deal with the Russians on the question of nuclear technology flight

to Iran. I haven’t budged for a moment since. Engaging Iran

diplomatically—not just plain talking, but engaging and finding

grounds for negotiations—is a political imperative.

The second point I would make is similar, as well, to my colleagues’,

and that is, I do not believe in a military option. I have

grave questions about its utility in the nuclear case, and, I believe,

in all the other issues that we would face—we face with Iran, there

is no room for a military response. In fact, the opposite is true. The

engagement on the military—on a military option with Iran would

set us back, not only with Iran and our ability to make progress

on the many issues with which we need traction, but beyond Iran,

throughout the Muslim world.

My third point is that I am a relative optimist about the possibility

of political engagement with Iran, including on the nuclear

issue. I don’t limit my remarks to my sense of the situation to

recent signals received from the leadership in Tehran or other Iranian

diplomatic representatives, nor do I limit myself to the gen-

erally favorable reaction our new President has had when he—after

his advent in his White House, throughout the region.

I look more closely at the enormous vulnerabilities that Iran has

today: Her political isolation, the weakness of her economy, her

internal political divisions. But, I look further than that, at the

long traditions of Iranian statecraft, which are based on realism,

a sense that Iran has got to survive in a very difficult world, and

that Iran is a nation that must manage its national security, and

that is its overwhelming imperative.

It’s those issues, the issues of national survival, that are first

and foremost on Iran’s mind. And that gives me some hope that we

can get traction if we choose to engage, and engage fully. But, I

won’t pretend, for a moment, that dealing with the Iranians will

not be extremely tough. There will be many setbacks, many deceptions.

Iran is a tough adversary across any negotiating table.

My fifth point is that I personally welcome, as I’m certain all of

us do, the appointment of a new special representative to take a

hard look at Iran and our foreign policy, Dennis Ross, a man with

great experience in the region, an expert in the field of statecraft.

And I can only wish him well.

But, as we approach the question of engagement with Iran, I

think there are some questions we’ve got to keep in mind, so let

me add a few thoughts to the list my colleagues have already outlined.

I believe that you cannot pick and choose issues with the Iranians.

And I include the nuclear issue. If you try to take one issue

out of the cherry pie, you will not succeed in addressing it. We

must have a global approach to the questions we deal with Iran.

All are related to Iranian perceptions of national dignity and national security.

Second, I believe that it is vitally important to get the political

context right, at the top. If you don’t have the Ayatollah, the

Supreme Leader, engaged with the President of the United States,

an agreement on what constitutes the terrain of engagement, you

won’t be able to engage on any single issue, including the nuclear issue.

In short—and I cite it in my testimony the example of President

Nixon and Chairman Mao—if you don’t have an understanding, at

the top, of what constitutes an acceptable political engagement, you

cannot pick apart the issues and be able to sustain a negotiation.

The third point I’d make is, it’s a long ways from here to where

we need to end up with Iran. The outcome, at the end of the day,

is full restoration of diplomatic relations, but there are many steps

along that way. They could start, literally, very shortly, Senator

Kerry, with our diplomats being able to speak to Iranians around

the world. That’s now not possible. It can go beyond, to very careful

reconsideration of the commitments we made in Algiers in 1981,

not to interfere in Iran’s internal affairs. We could deal with the

dangers we face every day in the gulf, where our Navy and Iranian

ships come uncomfortably close to one another, air flights between

the United States, Iran, cooperation on mutual issues, like narcotics,

diplomatic travel—all—all, in my judgment, ways on a way

station to build both confidence and create an environment in

which we can deal with the tough questions, including the nuclear one.

I further advise great caution in coming close to any question

related to Iranian domestic politics. I do not believe our pretensions

to regime change have done anything but set the prospect of diplomacy

back and created enormous complexities. It shows us, in fact,

doubling back on our own word that we struck in 1981.

But, I don’t recommend we make any apologies, either. We don’t

need to apologize for our past history, and Iran has every reason

to stay in the bounds of propriety in speaking about us.

We need not try to figure out who’s going to be on top in Iran.

Our job is to deal with Iran as a nation. It is not a problem, or a

cluster of problems, a nation, a country with major regional influence,

a nation with which the United States must come to terms.

I, finally, believe that it is vitally important we broaden our

diplomacy. If we engage Iran, we can’t do it alone. We’ve got to be

prepared to sit down and do business with Syria, with the Palestinians,

with the range of interests we face elsewhere in the Middle

East. We also have to take into account the extraordinary sensitivities

of those we are close to in the region, the Sunni Arabs, Israel,

that rightly feels disobliged by the threats that Iran has sent, our

European allies, the Russians, the Chinese, Japan. Their interests,

in each case, are at play. There is no way we can proceed in any

engagement with Iran without great transparency, without making

it clear where we’re headed and how we’re going to go about it.

Tactics are a different matter. We can engage in timing and in our

meetings on grounds of secrecy, but strategic transparency is vital.

So, let me turn, then, with a couple of thoughts on the nuclear

question. I warn, however, in addressing it, not to look at it in isolation,

for it is not one issue between the United States and Iran,

but part of the whole, and has to be dealt with in a context. But,

it is so vitally important. However old and however longstanding

the Iranian program is—and yes, it goes back to the time of the

Shah—and however worn the Iranian arguments of legality, the

Iranian nuclear pretensions are inherently destabilizing. There is

so little trust between Iran and ourselves and the region that one

can look at it in no other way.

No nation in the region is unaffected by what Iran has attempted

to do with its nuclear capability. And as we think about the NPT

regime, a breakout by Iran is truly worrying. As Henry Kissinger

is wont to argue, if you think of Russia in the old days, and the

United States, and then China, Russia, and the United States, and

then Europeans, and now India and Pakistan, how many miscalculations

each time you increase the circle of nuclear weaponsholders

can we face without a severe nuclear problem occurring?

So, I would prefer, like everyone, not to have a nuclear Iran, but

I also believe, as we approach it and try to contain the Iranian

issue, we must not break ranks with the Europeans or our Security

Council partners, the Russians and the Chinese. Getting together

and having common points are going to—is going to be very tough,

and it will, by necessity, mean we’ll have to water down the lines we use.

Sanctions, of course, have their place. Trade controls, financial

controls set a standard of concern about how we see the nuclear

issue. But, I think, like each one of you, I sense we need a new

approach, a different way of looking at the issue. We need to be

talking to the Iranians, more than the one-off appearance of Bill

Burns under the previous administration. We need to be sustained.

We have to deal with the Iranians within the strategic situation that they face.

And that means we’re going to have to manage our relationships

with our friends in the region very carefully, including defensive

measures. We have to think about enhancing antimissile systems

among our Arab friends. We have to think of security guarantees.

We’re going to even have to think about ways—special ways we can

deal with Israel’s well-founded concerns.

But, in the end, I’ve come, in my own mind, to a question that

troubles me, but has to be on the table, and that is Iran, for reasons

of its own, both reasons of pride and national security, is

determined to produce a nuclear weapons capability, and it is not

going to be dissuaded in any easy manner.

I, therefore, have come to believe that the line of argument

Ambassador Luers and Ambassador Pickering advanced in the

New York Review of Books several weeks ago, of arguing that we,

in the end, have to accept a degree of Iranian uranium enrichment

inside of Iran, under international ownership and supervision,

intense IAEA scrutiny, is a line of approach that is worth pursuing.

Finally, gentlemen, let me close by noting that I believe it’s not

only the nuclear issue that drives us to conclude to engage with

Iran. We’ve put off the question of dealing with Iran for much too

long, and the stakes have gone up. The miscalculations that could

occur, the possibility of violent confrontation, and the opportunities

lost by not engaging, the costs are simply too high.

We need a political engagement, and we need one that keeps the

international community alive to the fact that the United States is

capable of conducting diplomacy.

And search—search, as Iranians are beginning to hint these

days, for common ground. Don’t know if we’ll find it.

We won’t get there easily, but we have to try. Thank you.

Senator, I’ve followed, as you have, our diplomacy

now for a number of years, and we have talked throughout

about redlines, unacceptability, we’ve set deadlines, we’ve—I think,

frankly, as we look at the next stage, we should start emphasizing

the positive. Richard Haass has outlined many steps that we could

take. I’ve tried to indicate the importance of addressing Iran’s security

circumstances, of engaging it more generally. Begin to emphasize

the positive side of the agenda.

That does not——

That does not mean removing from the

table the negative side. But, rather than emphasizing publicly the

negative side and then being unable to deliver on it, either in our

dealings with the Security Council, notably the Russians and the

Chinese, I would prefer to downplay the negative, but be very serious

about organizing it to get——

Well——

Iran—I—Senator, you’re absolutely right.

The redline that I’m suggesting is one we draw internally, but

using it to threaten the Iranians—we’ve seen the consequences——

Of threat. Doesn’t do a lot.

That we have our own redline. That we organize our diplomacy to

meet that redline, I’m fully in support of. I want to try to change

the approach to the problem so we’re trying to engage the Iranians,

showing there’s flexibility in our diplomacy, while internally we are

very tough about the provisions——

Senator, the obvious facts are on the table.

The Iranians do not recognize the state of Israel. We have, in the

President of Iran, a Holocaust denier. Iran has been a principal

source of advice, finance arms to Hezbollah. Iran is deeply involved

with Hamas. Many aspects that you look at with regard to Iranian

behavior that are distinctly hostile to the state of Israel.

But, I don’t think—and I think your question goes—whether

that’s the whole story. I believe the Iranians are ambivalent about

Israel. They are realists at heart. They do not believe that Israel

can be eliminated. But they are also determined to make the point

that Israel cannot be a launching pad, for us or anyone else, in a

threat to them.

I spent one evening, some years ago, with former Iranian President,

and said, ‘‘Don’t you realize, Mr. President, how dangerous it

is, the armaments you’re giving to Hezbollah? The militarization of

southern Lebanon, the undertakings with Hamas, it can blow

Israel at war in Lebanon, it spreads to Syria, we’re involved, you’re

involved.’’ And Katami looked back at me, and he said, ‘‘Got to

remember, we plan our defense along external lines. We’re trying

to keep you from putting your hand around our throat.’’

Now, I don’t ask that you take such a statement at face value,

but to try to look at the world that Iran sees from inside of Iran

leads me back to the point that Senator Lugar made, and that is

that it is vitally important we address—we sit down and begin, as

part of our dialog, an exploration of what is security to Iran and

how to deal with the issue of security.

I am enormously taken by what Richard Haass said, Senator

Lugar, in talking about finding a way to accept a degree of Iranian

enrichment, but I warn Richard, all of us, that if you go too quickly

to that conclusion, without rooting it in a security understanding

with the Iranians, you may have cast aside a vitally useful way of

settling the nuclear matter, because you won’t have dealt with confidence,

you won’t have dealt with the core issues of Iranian security.

So, I like what Richard proposed to you, but I would say, ‘‘Careful,

don’t play that card too quickly.’’

Get your hands around the security question.

Forgive me for——

Happy to give it.

I have followed, as you have, the signals the Israelis have sent,

from military exercises to political statements by governments that

have been, in the past, and will, in the future be, in Israel. And

any Iranian who doesn’t take very seriously the Israeli threat to an

Iranian nuclear capability is misjudging his nation’s most vital

interests. I have no doubt about that.

But, where I depart, Senator, from the thrust of your remarks,

if I understand you correctly, is, I think an Israel nuclear

response—an Israeli military response to Iranian nuclear development

is going to put all of us in a really, really very difficult situation.

First of all, it is not clear to me that we will know, and Israel

will know, when Iran has crossed this redline. There will be a tremendous

amount of ambiguity; ambiguity that Israel might

accept—it would take a—not take a chance, but it would put us in

terrific harm’s way.

Second, I do not believe that you can knock out the Iranian

nuclear capability, as my colleagues have asserted. The nuclear

technologies have been indigenized in Iran. The ability to come

back very quickly would be on the table.

Third, I believe we will pay the price for an Israeli strike, just

as much as Israel will, and that our other objectives will be compromised.

Therefore, I would like to think that the right approach for the

United States, looking at the anxieties of Israel, is to look at

Israel’s defenses, to talk to Israel in terms of security guarantees,

to be able to dialogue with Israel on your overall diplomacy, to

open up other ways to consider a response to the Iranian problem

that is not purely military. Otherwise, I suggest we will fail to stop

the nuclear development in Iran, and we will further endanger the

peace of the region and Israel’s own most vital security interests.

I like what Richard just said. I’d just add

a footnote, and that is, the Chinese, in coming to the decision that

he described, will arrive at it very painfully. The Chinese have,

deeply rooted in their view, a predisposition against interference in

other nations’ activities. They are very hard to move, and they are

very hard to break loose from the Russians. I’m thinking of many

examples in recent years it has proved to be the case.

Rationally, Richard’s put his finger on why there is a reason and

an opening, but I come together with him in saying that if there

is a chance of moving Chinese diplomacy, it will have to be a very

high American priority and be clearly understood by the Chinese

to matter to the Obama administration.

I don’t have a different view, but I would

only add one more circle of complexity, and that is, it’s not just

about the United States and Russia; we’re going to have to be

extremely careful who we deal with the Czechs and the Poles. And

the way we presented the matter to NATO, there’s going to have

to be an acceptance that the linkage we’re talking about, in fact,

affects—is an effective linkage.

So, I think we’ve only seen a—my sense is that we’ve seen just

the tip of the iceberg of what is actually in play, and we’ve got to

learn a lot more before we can make a judgment.