Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to

all of our panelists, and a special hello to Senator Kerrey. It is good

to see you here, Bob.

I want to thank all of you for being here, and I think this is a

really important time to look very closely at our policy in Iraq. The

chairman and I have worked together on a variety of different bills.

I do not know how much in agreement or disagreement we are.

This is a time when we go through some important rethinking.

Let me just say at the beginning there is one obvious point of

agreement, which is that I think Saddam Hussein truly one of the

most dangerous individuals in the world, there is no question about

that in my mind, and therefore a major, major challenge. I am

pleased that the administration is going through a reevaluation of

our policy.

A year ago, and I think Secretary Halperin might remember this,

I posed several ideas to the Clinton administration about how we

might look at the existing sanctions regime, and my idea was that

we would have a stricter monitoring on weapons-related activity,

but that maybe what we would do is look at the economic sanctions

and think about more flexibility, and I would like to include that

letter in the record if I could, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Powell last week I think has

raised some important questions, and his idea, as I understand it,

of a stronger international effort to block Iraqi imports of arms and

other military items, coupled with an easing of nonmilitary items

and a more flexible approach to items that serve civilian needs I

think could form the basis of a new international consensus on Iraq

sanctions, and I hope, Mr. Chairman, that we will get into a discussion

of what I think is a very important question.

Look, first of all, I am not the expert, and second of all, this is

far from simple, and you have got a government that has not been

willing to comply with, at least for 2 years, plus now, any arms inspection,

you have got a government that is involved in widespread

and brutal human rights abuses, and there is no question that this

is a real challenge.

But I do think that there are questions that can be raised about

the sanctions regime, and I also want to just pose two other questions

as we engage in some hopefully hard thinking about Iraq.

One of them is, we have been doing this—the policy of overflying

Iraq has been in place now for years. It puts our pilots in danger

on a daily basis, but I do not think it has changed the Government

of Iraq’s behavior at all, and I know that Senator Kerrey has been

outspoken, as you have, Mr. Chairman, in support of the Iraq Liberation

Act, but I think we ought to think very carefully about

whether or not we want to provide lethal military weapons to the

Iraqi opposition.

I mean, if we do so, we risk overcommitting ourselves and leading

the opposition to believe that the United States military will

intervene if its fledgling efforts should falter, and I think the question

we have got to deal with—and Senator Kerrey is always very

direct. He is known for that, but are we prepared to rescue the

Iraqi opposition—I mean, I think we need to deal with that question

in this hearing—or are we prepared to let it die again?

Now, if the current Government of Iraq should implode, we

should be ready to move ahead with a generous assistance package

to help Iraq develop a vibrant and democratic society, but by most

informed accounts the opposition appears to be splintered, and

weak, and may have little realistic chance of removing Saddam

Hussein from power.

I welcome again Senator Kerrey, Mort Halperin, Tony

Cordesman, and Richard Perle to the hearing, and I look forward

to your views, and I think really this committee, this is very timely,

very important, and I really look forward to the discussion we

are going to have.

Thank you.

I welcome this hearing on our policy toward Iraq as the Administration initiates

a comprehensive review that could have far-reaching consequences for U.S. relations

with the Arab world. The beginning of a new Administration is an appropriate time

to review our policies and, where necessary, to recraft them in a way that meets

the changing political and humanitarian concerns in the Middle East. A year ago,

in the midst of the Clinton Administration’s own Iraq policy review, I posed several

ideas about how to apply the existing sanctions regime more flexibly while preserving

strict monitoring of any weapons-related activity. I would like to insert into

the Committee record a copy of the letter I wrote to the President outlining those

ideas.

In this regard, Secretary Powell’s trip last week to consult with our friends and

allies in the Middle East was an extremely important initiative. The ideas that he

discussed—a stronger international effort to block Iraqi imports of arms and military-

related items coupled with an easing of non-military items and a more flexible

approach to items that serve essential civilian needs—could form the basis of a new

international consensus on Iraq sanctions. I hope that this hearing will help us put

these ideas into perspective.

Iraq poses a series of complex questions for policy makers. On the one hand, we

are confronted with the Iraqi government’s persistent refusal to meet its obligations

with regard to Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), as well as its record of wholesale

human rights abuses. At the same time, the comprehensive UN sanctions regime

has contributed to a longstanding humanitarian crisis that has seriously affected

the health and well-being of millions of innocent Iraqis. It is clear that the

policies of the Iraqi government have greatly compounded and magnified the humanitarian

crisis, and that the government has not made the welfare of its civilian

population a priority. Even so, it has long seemed to me that a new approach on

sanctions which allows much greater flexibility in the sanctions regime for obviously

humanitarian goods and for certain dual use goods makes a lot of sense.

It is true that the Iraqi government bears the lion’s share of responsibility for unnecessary

civilian suffering due to its persistent refusal to comply with the UN

weapons inspection program. This refusal is underscored by widespread media reports

about Iraq’s possible effort to rebuild certain of its WMD capacities. However,

the callous behavior of the Iraqi government does not excuse the international community

from its own humanitarian obligations.

I believe that we ought to explore further Secretary Powell’s initiative, refine it,

and see if constructive alternative approaches can be developed in place of the current

stalemate. We need some hard thinking on Iraq. Our policy of overlying Iraq

has been in place for years and puts our pilots in danger on a daily basis but has

not changed the government of Iraq’s behavior. I know that Senator Kerrey has

been outspoken in his support for the Iraq Liberation Act, but we need to think

carefully whether to support providing lethal military weapons to the Iraqi opposition.

We risk overcommiting ourselves and leading the opposition to believe that the

United States military will intervene if its fledgling efforts should falter. Are we

prepared to rescue the Iraqi opposition? Are we prepared to let it die again?

If the current government in Iraq should implode, certainly we should be prepared

to move ahead with a generous assistance package to help Iraq develop a vibrant

and democratic society. But, by most informed accounts, the opposition appears

splintered and weak and may have little realistic chance of removing Saddam Hussein

from power.

I welcome Senator Kerrey, Mort Halpern, Richard Perle, and Tony Cordesman to

the hearing today and look forward to hearing their views.

Would you tell this witness here to please

behave himself?

Let us continue with this discussion. I want

to get back maybe at the end of my time to sanctions. Mort, I just

want to quote from part of your testimony, then bounce this off of

everyone, starting with you. You say, ‘‘anyone advocating a serious’’—

and this is the issue we are focused on—‘‘a serious and determined

effort to change this regime in the short run by a covert

force bears a very heavy burden of demonstrating that such an effort

has a real chance of success without massive American military

action.’’

Now, for each of you, starting with you, Mort, do you think that

the Iraqi opposition can undertake a major successful operation

without the United States being a part of this, or being dragged in,

or however you want to put it, and do you think the American people

would support such an effort? That is, I guess, my question initially

for each of you.

The other part of my question for you, and

each of you, is, I asked you whether or not you thought this could

be done without major American involvement, both air and ground,

and you said you would need that. Would you advocate such a policy?

But my question was whether or not you

think this opposition can undertake this effort without, in fact,

major involvement by us.

So your position is, you go from containment

to replacement, and it would be Iraqi opposition forces, but

it would also necessitate major involvement by us militarily, and

we should do that? I am just trying to be clear.

You know how you can do this—the last

word I get and that is not fair to you, and then move on to others,

but just so you respond to this, and then I promise to move on, but

really, it certainly—I mean, if we are talking about air strikes and

ground troops, that seems to me to be rather different. Yes, we

have a military presence. This seems to be a rather different order

from where we are right now, yes?

Mort, I gather that—and I do not want to

take time away from Secretary Perle or Mr. Cordesman, but I gather

in some ways what you just said goes back to the distinction

that Senator Kerrey was trying to draw between containment—you

are talking about a different policy of containment. You do not

want to go with drift versus what he called replacement, am I correct?

You are saying, as unhappy a prospect as it is, the containment,

a different kind of containment is a policy that you think is workable

and sustainable, and I think Secretary Perle has a different—

I mean, let me try and just take 5 more minutes and draw out your

perspective. I do not want to preclude you.

I knew he would say something like that,

Mort.

You know, Mr. Chairman, I want to hear

from Mr. Cordesman before we finish, but I was thinking about

this testimony, which I think has been very important, but it is not

as important as it should be if it is just a hearing and that is it.

One of the things we might do, because we have been apart on

this, is we might—the staffs get together and see exactly what area

of common ground we have. We should go through the same exercise

as this discussion, and I will tell you, this committee, I think

we should.

The other thing is, I really believe we should, this committee, we

should put together a whole set of hearings on this issue, the whole

question.

Mr. Cordesman started out earlier saying

I think we ought to do a whole set of hearings and

just stay with it, and I am committed to doing that, and we could

work together on it. I think it is really important to do.

By the way, I would like to thank all of you in advance. Thank

you.