The hearing will come to order. Thanks very

much for coming this afternoon. As everybody knows, we are here

today to discuss the situation in Libya, and we’re very pleased to

have with us the Deputy Secretary of State, Jim Steinberg. All of

us became aware this week that Secretary Steinberg is going to be

departing his current post and leaving government, I hope temporarily,

to return to academia as the dean of the Maxwell School at

Syracuse University. I’m not sure they want to hear me say ‘‘temporarily,’’

but that’s certainly the way we feel.

Obviously, we wish you well in that endeavor, and we thank you

for your tremendous service to the country and to the State Department.

I want to just remind my colleagues on the committee, lest any

of us accidentally cross over into forbidden territory, that yesterday’s

briefing was classified and, since we’re in an open session

here today, we all need to be careful not to base any questions or

draw any comments into yesterday’s briefing.

Over the last 9 days, as we all know, the United States has

joined a robust international coalition and in my judgment and the

judgment of many has averted a humanitarian catastrophe in

Libya and sent a strong message to the region, even as we all know

things are not yet fully resolved.

Some people, have expressed reservations about this, which is

the way it works here, and it’s a good and healthy thing, and we

welcome a debate. I certainly do. What I hope we can do here this

afternoon is contribute to that debate with facts and obviously address

important questions: Where do we go from here? What’s the

path forward? Who are the Libyan opposition? What diplomatic,

economic tools are available to us to pressure Qadhafi to accomplish

the stated goal, not just of the United States, but of the inter-

national community? And if and when he is in a state of departure,

what comes next?

All of these are important questions and we’re very eager to

hear, Secretary, your views on this, how we transition from missiles

and bombs and overflights to stability and to peace in Libya.

My views, I think, are relatively well known on this. I’ve certainly

made them public, and I’ve laid out what I see as the justification

for this military intervention. I’m not going to go through

all the details of that now. But I’d like to just emphasize as some

ask questions, I believe we do have strategic interests at stake in

this intervention and in Libya. I am convinced, and particularly

from a recent visit of 2 days in Cairo and time in Israel and discussions

in both London and Paris with French and British allies, as

well as with others, I am convinced that we have strategic interests

at stake.

What we do as part of this international coalition will and does

reverberate throughout North Africa and the Middle East, a region

where extremists have thrived and attacks against Western interests

have been incubated. By supporting the Libyan opposition—I

have met with them personally, incidentally, and met with them

when I was in Cairo, and I have asked members of the opposition

to come here and have talked with the White House about that,

and I hope they will in short order, so that colleagues will have a

chance to meet with them and size them up for themselves, at least

their representatives.

But I think that we at least give them a fighting chance to oust

a dictator with a long, strong history of terrorism and the blood of

Americans on his hands. At the same time, we keep alive and even

encourage the hopes of reformers in the Arab world and we counter

the violent extremism of al-Qaeda and like-minded groups.

I think we also encourage a new generation of Arabs to pursue

dignity and democracy and perhaps create the opportunity for a

new relationship with the people of a greater, new Middle East.

These are worthy goals and if we can accomplish them they will

significantly alter the options that we face with respect to our foreign

policy and our military policy. I also think that if Qadhafi had

been successful in just moving willy-nilly into Benghazi and doing

what he promised to do, which is show no mercy and other things,

then I think the suppression of the aspirations of the Libyan people

would have had reverberations beyond, way beyond, Libya itself. I

think it would have been a setback for the dreams unfolding across

that region, and the legitimate demands of peaceful protesters I

think we all know should never be met with bullets. We need to

send that message loudly and clearly to adversaries and allies

alike.

In any country of decency, unprovoked violence against peaceful

protesters is unacceptable, whether it’s in Syria or Bahrain or

Yemen or anywhere else. I think that treatment of one’s own citizens

in that way betrays basic notions of human rights, and is contrary

to the values that we hold so near and dear.

Now, we’re all concerned about the violence against protesters in

Syria. I thought that President Bashar al-Assad could have used

his speech yesterday to set out a more precise course of action with

respect to reforms. I gather today there’s been some further articu-

lation of some measures. But I think with large protests scheduled

for tomorrow, it is essential that his officials, that the officials in

Syria, refrain from using violence against their own people.

Some have asked, why Libya and not other humanitarian situations?

The truth is it’s a perfectly appropriate question. We’re going

to weigh our ideals, our interests, and our capabilities in each case.

The President said this the other day. I think a number of us have

said it over the course of time. None of these countries or situations

are the same, and in each one of them we need to weigh our ideals,

our interests, our capabilities, and the possibilities, and then decide

where and how to become involved.

In the case of Libya, where the opposition and the Arab League

called for our help, I think the scales tipped heavily in favor of the

intervention that we have engaged in.

So I understand that some of our colleagues have concern. I have

no doubt that my good friend and the ranking member of the committee

will articulate some of those shortly. And some have concerns

about the question of consultation with Congress. That is an

important constitutional question and I have always as a Member

of Congress advocated the maximum amount of engagement with

the Congress and that clearly we’re stronger where we can act with

the support of the American people as expressed through the

Congress.

But I do believe that here there was, given a number of things,

not the least of which was that Congress was out of session—but

I think that a lot of consultation took place. Certainly Senator

Lugar and I were part of several phone calls with the President

from afar, and that consultation has continued even through yesterday

and the briefing that all Senators received.

Both Presidents, Democratic and Republican alike, have authorized

limited military action in the last 30 years. I’ve been here for

27 of them and I have seen that in Grenada, in Bosnia, in Kosovo,

in Panama, Haiti, any number of situations.

That is not to say that each one has to meet the test of the capacity

of the Congress to respond and of the nature of the event.

But Somalia likewise, I guess, is one.

So the debate is healthy and we are already in fact beginning the

work of drafting an appropriate resolution. Whether we will need

it or not I don’t know. But we are beginning the work of drafting

that so that we are ready in the event that we need to proceed forward

and put this question to the Congress.

Senator Lugar.

Thank you, Senator Lugar. Indeed, I think we’ll

probably be having another hearing next week with outside witnesses.

So we would expect to continue the process.

Mr. Secretary, again thanks for being here. We’re happy to have

you. If you want to place your entire statement in the record, it will

be placed in as if read in full, and we look forward to your

comments.

Thank you very much, Secretary.

What could you share with the committee about the breadth of

the knowledge of the opposition at this point in time and your

sense of their defined platform/direction?

What would you say concomitantly about the

military component and the military leadership at this point?

Well, when you talk about sort of the broad aspirations

of the Libyan people, is it your conviction at this point and

do you have evidence that in effect both groups represent the broad

aspirations of the Libyan people? Both groups, the opposition political

and the military components.

You mentioned the notion of an envoy. What

would that expectation be and when might that occur?

Now, the President sent a letter to the majority

leader and to the Speaker of the House on March 21 notifying

them, as appropriately, of the introduction of armed forces into

Libya on the 19th. Sixty days past March 21 is May 20. In light

of NATO’s assumption of the operations in Libya and the changed

role of the United States, my question is whether the administration

will expect that by May 20 Armed Forces of the United States

of America will be engaged in, specifically using the words of the

War Powers Act, or resolution, ‘‘hostilities or situations where

imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances.’’

Well, we anticipate obviously staying in close

touch with you on this. I asked that question because it’s relevant,

needless to say, to our thinking as well as the essential formulation

of any kind of resolution. And needless to say, I think the next

days will tell more about that than anything else, most likely.

Senator Lugar.

Senator Lugar, we hope you’ll feel better. You’re

making us all feel sick.

Senator Menendez.

Senator Corker.

Thank you, Senator Corker.

Senator Cardin.

Thank you, Senator Cardin.

Senator Risch.

Senator Udall.

Thank you, Senator Udall.

Senator Rubio.

Thanks, Senator Rubio.

I might just mention to you, Senator, that I think that you used

words like ‘‘survive’’ and ‘‘in control,’’ and I think there’s a lot of

distance here in between the way this can play out, where there

are a lot of options available that don’t have him necessarily in

control at all and maybe even, like Milosevic, it takes a little bit

of time, but eventually he’s going to move. I think we need to sort

of be thoughtful about what those parameters are.

Senator Durbin.

If Senator Isakson would permit me, is there any

reason that Colonel Qadhafi can’t pay for this himself through

those funds?

Pay for the costs of this military effort.

Right. We’ve taken control of them. Wouldn’t we

have a legal basis on which to lay a claim for the payment for damages

for the cost of his actions?

Well, I think we’d like to very squarely put it on

the table that we ought to be looking at that hard. I would think

our NATO friends and others would be equally interested in it.

Thank you.

Senator Isakson.

Thank you, Senator Isakson.

Senator Shaheen.

Thank you very much, Senator Shaheen.

Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. I’d just say in closing, unless

Senator Lugar has additional questions, that in my meetings

with Mahmoud Jabril I had a sense of clarity and seriousness of

purpose and certainly even a gravitas about what their responsibilities

are and the direction they’re moving in.

So I think the more we can give them—I think that’s the wrong

word. The more they can give themselves shape and form in the

next days and the more we can perhaps open up an opportunity for

people to feel who they really are, I think that would help people’s

understanding of where we’re going here.

I couldn’t agree with you more.

Thank you very much. I think it was very helpful today. We

appreciate it, and we stand adjourned.