Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I thank

you for holding this important hearing. And I join you in welcoming

our distinguished witnesses.

The Libyan civil war continues with little prospect that the opposition

will be able to defeat the Qadhafi regime’s forces in the near

term, even with the backing of coalition airstrikes.

The President and members of his team have stated that the removal

of Qadhafi is a diplomatic goal of the United States, but not

a military goal. The administration has not addressed specifically

what its plans are for supporting the rebels or how the conflict

might be concluded. The President has been silent on what our responsibilities

may be for rebuilding a post-Qadhafi Libya. We are

left with a major commitment of U.S. military and diplomatic resources

to an open-ended conflict backing rebels whose identity is

not fully illuminated. This lack of definition increases the likelihood

of mission creep and alliance fracture.

The President has not made the case that the Libya intervention

is in the vital interests of the United States. Calculations of our

vital interests must include the impact of any elective military

operation on our $14 trillion national debt and on armed forces

strained by long deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Beyond these resource considerations, the application of American

power in Libya is misplaced given what is happening or may

happen elsewhere in the Islamic world. When measured against

other regional contingencies, Libya appears as a military conflict in

which we have let events determine our involvement, instead of our

vital interests. The sustained security problems presented by Iran,

which is aggressively pursuing a nuclear weapons capability, and

Pakistan, which already has one, are magnitudes greater than the

problems posed by Libya. Clearly, with a combined 145,000 American

troops in Iraq and Afghanistan and years of American effort

invested in both, those countries have to be considered a far higher

priority than Libya. Although Qadhafi could conceivably lash out

with a terrorist attack, the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and

Yemen, which is the epicenter of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,

pose the most intense threats of a significant terrorist attack

in the near term.

Politically, the outcome of changes in Egypt, which has a population

13 times greater than Libya’s and is a cultural and military

power within the Arab world, will have far more impact on the

strategic calculations of other nations than Libya, with its tribal

conflicts and idiosyncratic politics driven by Qadhafi and his sons.

Meanwhile the Arab-Israeli peace process is going nowhere, with

additional uncertainties in the region being created by the popular

upheavals in Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and other nations. In this context,

a rational strategic assessment would never devote sizable

military, diplomatic, economic, and alliance resources to a civil war

in Libya.

The President has attempted to link United States humanitarian

intervention in Libya to strategic interests in the broader Middle

East, but this link is extremely tenuous. In his March 28 speech,

the President stated that if Qadhafi succeeds in violently repressing

his people, ‘‘democratic impulses that are dawning across the

region would be eclipsed by the darkest form of dictatorship, as repressive

leaders concluded that violence is the best strategy to cling

to power.’’

But leaders in the region, as well as ordinary citizens, are making

calculated decisions based on local circumstances, not what

happens in Libya. It is not apparent that any government has

taken a softer line on protesters because we have bombed Libya.

In fact, governments and populations in the region recognize that

a coalition intervention on behalf of citizen’s movements is less

likely because forces are committed to Libya and because the

strategic rationale for intervention depended on coalition and Arab

League support. There will be no Arab League request to support

the protesters in southern Syria or the Shia in Bahrain, for

example.

The White House has emphasized the role being played by allies.

I applaud any burden-sharing that is achieved. But in a revealing

development earlier this week, the coalition called on the United

States to continue airstrikes during a period of bad weather,

because our capabilities exceeded that of other nations.

Even if allies do assume most of the burden for air operations,

the longer these operations extend, the more help from the United

States is likely to be required. Nor should we assume that missions

performed over Libya by Britain, France, and other NATO allies

are necessarily cost-free to the United States. The commitments of

our allies in Libya leave NATO with less capacity for responding

to other contingencies. We need to know, for example, whether the

Libyan intervention will make it even harder to sustain allied

contributions to operations in Afghanistan. Will allies say, ‘‘We are

dealing with the Libyan problem, as you asked, but we can’t

continue to do this without reducing our military commitments

elsewhere’’?

Most troubling, we don’t know what will be required of the

United States if there is an unanticipated escalation in the war or

an outcome that leads to United States participation in the reconstruction

of Libya.

At our hearing last week with Deputy Secretary Steinberg, many

Senators raised concerns about these scenarios. The last 10 years

have illuminated clearly that initiating wars and killing the enemy

is far easier than achieving political stability and rebuilding a

country when the fighting is over. The American people are

concerned about potential commitments that would leave the

United States with a large bill for nation-building in a post-civilwar

Libya.

The President must establish U.S. goals and strategies with

much greater clarity. He has not stated whether the United States

would accept a long-term stalemate in the civil war. If we do not

accept a stalemate, what is our strategy for either ending Qadhafi’s

rule or exiting the coalition? Without a defined endgame, Congress

and the American people must assume U.S. participation in the coalition

may continue indefinitely, with all the costs and risks that

come with such a commitment.

With all these considerations in mind, I look forward to the insights

of our witnesses.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I’d like to raise the general question of when the

United States should become involved in the civil war of another

country. Now, in this specific case, the thought has been that we

are implementing a response on the basis of important humanitarian

concerns. But, whatever that justification may have been, it

came as a result of people fighting each other in Libya. And terrible

things happen in civil wars. It may very well be that, in civil

wars that have occurred elsewhere in the world, people might have

suggested intervention at some point to save a lot of lives; or simply

to terminate the civil war, for example. But, I simply question,

to begin with, the premise that the United States should become

involved in a civil war. And I would like comment, by any of you,

on that general premise.

Mr. Malinowski, do you have an idea?

Let me just leap ahead for a moment to the fact

that we are, apparently, implementing a humanitarian response.

Now, at the onset, would it not have been appropriate for the President

to say, ‘‘This is my plan for Libya,’’ and then provide some detail

regarding manner in which our Armed Forces would be used

and the nature of our long-term involvement in the country?

Essentially, the Iraq situation comes to mind, where, clearly, the

dictator was overthrown fairly rapidly, but then our stated reason

for the use of military force shifted from the regime’s possession of

weapons of mass destruction to building a model democratic state

in the Middle East. And 8 years later, we have achieved that, I

hope. But, a lot of people are suggesting that we should not be so

fast about withdrawing the troops because it may undercut whatever

progress has been made.

In other words, it just seems to me that we’re still in a situation

that started with the humanitarian affair, but continues, day by

day, improvised, without any particular congressional approval, or

approval of the rest of the Nation, except for polls that ask, ‘‘Do

you think the President is handling the situation in Libya correctly

or incorrectly,’’ and so forth. What is the proper course now for the

President, for the Congress, and for the country in terms of our foreign

policy in Libya?

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.