I’ll wait.

Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Secretary Burns, thank you for your good work.

I want to talk a little bit about an area that Senator Lugar explored

with you, and that is the larger context of our relationship

with Russia. It has been noted here this morning, partly in your

very complete statement, which I read, in addition to your comments

and your testimony, as well as my colleagues’ line of questioning,

that we have many common interests with Russia, and

those common interests will continue—what the Senator from

Pennsylvania was talking about: Proliferation, nonproliferation efforts,

energy, Iran, the Middle East, Iraq. We are living in a world

where these common interests are now woven into the same fabric.

And the reality of what took place in Georgia, as you have noted

and we all are aware, complicates that relationship.

And my question is—recognizing that this administration has

but 4 months left in office, and that is a factor, which I recognize,

but, more to the point, so to the Russians and the Georgians and

our European allies, that we are going to have a new President, we

are going to have a new administration, we are going to have a

new Congress—but, that stated, what initiatives are we taking to

find some new higher ground to develop new venues, new opportunities,

new formats to reconstruct a relationship with Russia?

You mentioned the ‘‘2 plus 2’’ talks, as Senator Lugar did. For

example, are President Bush and President Medvedev talking on

any kind of a regular basis? Are Secretary Rice and Minister

Lavrov talking on any kind of a regular basis? You talk about our

common interests, as well, with our European allies and our European

partners, and we are working with them, and working

through NATO, and the various forms that we have with the Europeans

on these issues, but what are we doing with Russia? It

seems to me that’s a pretty essential part of wherever we go. We

do know—and I think, with Senator Nelson’s comments at the

opening of this hearing, there’s just but one reflection on this reality,

that we’re going to have to find some new common ground

and new high ground to deal with Russia, which includes Georgia,

which includes Central Asia, and their interests, as perceived by

them—not just perceived by us, but their optics. And we’re going

to have to reverse the optics, to some extent; at the same, time, defend

and recognize and honor the interests of any sovereign nation,

which Georgia is.

But, there’s going to have to be a very delicate balance struck

here that we work our way through this, as you know so well, and

as Senator Lugar has noted—you probably understand it as well as

anybody in the government today.

So, if you could take that as a reference, and not a particularly

succinct question, but I’m interested, really, in—Are we doing anything,

taking any new initiatives with Russia, to find some higher

ground here to get us into the new few years?

In all due respect, Mr. Secretary, I understand

all that, and you’ve covered that ground, but let me go back to my

question. Are we doing anything new, anything fresh, taking the

reality that we have before us, as has been noticed this morning,

the disproportionate response from Russia in Georgia? And what’s

happened since then? Have we done anything new? Has the President

talked to President Medvedev very often? Is there anything

new? I know what you’ve just noted, here, and what’s been on the

books and on track, but are we thinking in any different way? Because

just as Senator Lugar said, just one element of NATO membership,

article 5—does America understand—do all peoples of the

nations that are members of NATO understand what article 5

means? We seem to kind of dance around these issues. Our Defense

Department has been, as you noticed in—noted in your testimony,

been in Georgia, examining, exploring, coming back with some assessment

of what Georgia’s military needs are going to be. Have we

made a decision there? Have we factored that into any regional

component of this? But, also, to the point, what are we doing new,

if anything, with Russia—the United States?

The President has not spoken with President

Medvedev since the Russian incursion into Georgia?

Thank you.