

# A REGIONAL OVERVIEW ON THE MIDDLE EAST

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HEARING  
BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

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OCTOBER 28, 2009

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## **A REGIONAL OVERVIEW ON THE MIDDLE EAST**

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**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2009**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST  
AND SOUTH ASIA,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:06 p.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Gary L. Ackerman (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. ACKERMAN. The subcommittee will come to order.

While this hearing is meant to cover the range of issues facing the United States and the region stretching from Egypt to the Persian Gulf, in my opening remarks I would like to focus on Iran. Like many others, I have been thinking a lot about Iran, and despite my best efforts, I keep coming back to, of all things, the second Reagan administration. It was in the second term that President Reagan and Secretary of State George Shultz negotiated significant convention and nuclear arms control agreements and helped thaw out the Cold War with frequent high-level summits. Throughout this period of intensive diplomatic engagement, however, President Reagan never stopped speaking powerfully and frequently about dissidents, human rights, and freedom.

Obviously, the Soviet challenge then and the Iranian challenge today are very different. But what really stands out is the way the Reagan team in the second term sustained a multifocal, steady and comprehensive of pressure on the Soviets. The summitry demonstrated that the problem was in Moscow, not in Washington. The consistent focus on human rights and freedom reminded domestic, allied and Soviet audiences just how ugly the Soviet regime really was.

Following some terrible strains in the transatlantic alliance in the first term, the Reagan administration worked hard on sustaining our relations in both Europe and East Asia to ensure that the Soviets had no political escape valve. Following the initial massive spasm of defense spending in the first term, the steady deployment of United States and NATO forces that were technologically passing by the Soviets simply couldn't be ignored. And, of course, the Intelligence Community made life in the Kremlin miserable, not only by stealing secrets, but organizing and supporting opposition to the Soviets wherever it could take root.

So in thinking about our Iran policy today, what strikes me is how thin it seems to be. We seem to be depending on just one or

two policy elements, when, in fact, many more are possible. President Obama's support for direct engagement with Iran, as with the Reagan-Gorbachev summitry that I have described has already helped to heal a variety of political woes, but by itself diplomatic engagement still leaves too much initiative in Iranian hands.

Likewise, with economic sanctions, if the Iranians remain calcitrant and sanctions are applied, no matter how crippling—and I would want them to be absolutely suffocating to the regime—the initiative is still left to the ayatollahs to decide when they have had enough. But what seems most puzzling to me is that the administration appears to have absolutely nothing at all to say about Iran's Green Movement. Staying out of the way in June was smart, but the complete silence since then is, to me, inexplicable.

Support within Iran for the nuclear program runs across the spectrum, but there is a strong case to be made that the Iranian regime went to Geneva and has bargained since then, primarily because of their concern about domestic stability rather than fears about international sanctions.

I have also heard from many leaders in the Middle East who complain that the Obama administration doesn't seem to have any better a plan for increasing the multilateral political and security coordination in the Persian Gulf than did their predecessors. And while the administration has increased American attention to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, at least in part to win broader Arab support for pressure against Iran, my question would be, where is the support? The Iranians are actively stirring up trouble or developing or maintaining the capacity do so in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Kuwait and Morocco. Where is the countervailing United States response? Where is the Truman-like policy of committing ourselves to support our allies in their struggle to remain free from threats and subversion?

I am not suggesting another Cold War or holding up Iran as the new Soviet Union. My concern is that we are dealing with the Iranians piecemeal and, thus, giving them too much opportunity to shape events to their liking. And I am not calling for linkage, where success in one area depends on one or more of the others, but I do think that we need a comprehensive approach.

Like Gorbachev's team, the regime in Tehran is facing an unprecedented challenge from within. Why is it then we seem incapable of taking advantage of this fact and bemoaning for years the insufficiency of our leverage? We don't need to make threats, and we certainly shouldn't allow ourselves to get sucked into yet another conflict. But I can't help but wonder, why can't we squeeze with five fingers instead of just one or two?

And with that I will turn to our ranking member, thank you very much, Representative Burton.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ackerman follows:]

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**“A Regional Overview of the Middle East”**  
**Gary L. Ackerman, Chairman**  
**Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia**

While this hearing is meant to cover the range of issues facing the United States in the region stretching from Egypt to the Persian Gulf, in my opening remarks, I'd like to focus on Iran. Like many others, I've been thinking a lot about Iran and despite my best efforts, I keep coming back to, of all things, the second Reagan Administration.

It was in his second term that President Reagan and Secretary of State George Shultz negotiated significant conventional and nuclear arms control agreements, and helped thaw out the Cold War with frequent high-level summits. Throughout this period of intensive diplomatic engagement, however, President Reagan never stopped speaking powerfully and frequently about dissidents, human rights and freedom.

Obviously, the Soviet challenge then, and the Iranian challenge today are very different. But what really stands out is the way the Reagan team, in the second term, sustained a multi-focal, steady and comprehensive pressure on the Soviets.

The summitry demonstrated that the problem was in Moscow, not in Washington. The consistent focus on human rights and freedom reminded domestic, allied and Soviet audiences just how ugly the Soviet regime really was. Following some terrible strains in the Trans-Atlantic alliance in the first term, the second Reagan Administration worked hard on sustaining our relations in both Europe and East Asia to ensure that the Soviets had no political escape valve.

Following the initial, massive spasm of defense spending in the first term, the steady deployment of U.S. and NATO forces that were technologically passing by the Soviets simply couldn't be ignored. And, of course, the intelligence community made life in the Kremlin miserable, not only by stealing secrets, but organizing and supporting opposition to the Soviets wherever it could take root.

So, when thinking about our Iran policy today, what strikes me is how “thin” it seems to be. We seem to be depending on just one or two policy elements when, in fact, many more are possible. President Obama’s support for direct engagement with Iran, as with the Reagan-Gorbachev summitry I’ve described, has already helped to heal a variety of political woes. But by itself, diplomatic engagement still leaves too much initiative in Iranian hands. Likewise with economic sanctions. If the Iranians remain recalcitrant and sanctions are applied, no matter how crippling—and I’d want them to be absolutely suffocating to the regime—the initiative is still left to the ayatollahs to decide when they’ve had enough.

But what seems most puzzling to me is that the Administration appears to have absolutely nothing at all to say about Iran’s Green movement. Staying out of the way in June was smart, but the complete silence since then is inexplicable. Support within Iran for the nuclear program runs across the spectrum. But there’s a strong case to be made that the Iranian regime went to Geneva and has bargained since then primarily because of their concern about domestic stability, rather than fears about international sanctions.

I’ve also heard from many leaders in the Middle East who complain that the Obama Administration doesn’t seem to have any better a plan for increasing multilateral political or security coordination in the Persian Gulf than did their predecessors. And, while the Administration has increased American attention to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, at least in part to win broader Arab support for pressure against Iran, my question is, where’s the support?

The Iranians are actively stirring up trouble, or developing or maintaining the capacity to do so, in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Kuwait and Morocco. Where’s the countervailing U.S. response? Where’s the Truman-like policy of committing ourselves to support our allies in their struggle to remain free from threats and subversion?

I am not suggesting another Cold War, or holding Iran up as the new Soviet Union. My concern is that we’re dealing with the Iranians piecemeal, and thus giving them too much opportunity to shape events to their liking. And I’m not calling for linkage, where success in one area depends on success in one or more of the others. But I think we do need a comprehensive approach.

Like Gorbachev’s team, the regime in Tehran is facing an unprecedented challenge from within. Why is it then that we seem incapable of taking advantage of this fact after bemoaning for years the insufficiency of our leverage? We don’t need to make threats and we certainly shouldn’t allow ourselves to get sucked into yet another conflict. But I can’t help but wonder, why can’t we squeeze with five fingers instead of one or two?

###

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I really appreciate you calling this important and timely hearing. There are countless issues that need to be addressed throughout the Middle East and South Asia, and it is very difficult to know where to begin.

First and foremost on my mind is the threat posed by Iran in its suspected pursuit and development of nuclear weapons and missiles capable of carrying those weapons. The Iranian regime has shown no signs that it plans to respond positively to any diplomatic efforts by the United States or the international community to halt uranium enrichment. The alleged deal being negotiated in Geneva, which the Iranian regime has yet to accept almost 1 week after the deadline, doesn't require Iran to stop uranium enrichment or even ship its entire current stockpile of enriched uranium out of the country. In my opinion, that is not a good deal for the United States—or Israel, for that matter.

The current Iranian regime has no regard for the United States, the international community or even the Iranian people. After the clearly rigged elections, we saw the outrage of the Iranian people toward a government that is continually misrepresenting their wishes with an appallingly heavy-handed response to protests. The time for inaction from the United States has long passed.

I am pleased that earlier today the full Foreign Affairs Committee finally marked up Chairman Berman's Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act of 2009. If we truly want to reach an agreement with Iran, then we must put some muscle behind our words; and the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act, in my opinion, is the kind of muscle we need.

And I am very concerned that we have got three other committees that we have got to get this thing through. And we need to get it done quickly; I mean, it took 6 months to get this far, and I don't want it to take any longer than that, and I hope the chairman will push as hard as he can.

While Iran is a net exporter of unrefined petroleum, it is a net importer of refined petroleum products like gasoline. In June 2007, when the Iranian Government implemented a gasoline rationing system, the Iranian public rioted. Giving President Obama the authority to target Iran's refined petroleum industry is sure to get the mullahs' attention and strengthen the President's hand in Geneva.

It is my hope that this bill will move quickly to the floor for a vote, as it has already garnered the support of 330 cosponsors. However, to do nothing and continue to allow the Iranians to delay and stall, their capabilities will grow; and one day we will see on the front page headlines an announcement that Iran has tested a nuclear bomb, and at that point it will be far too late for the international community to do anything.

The second major concern on my mind also involves the Middle East. I am very concerned about the prospects for peace between Israel and Palestine. I believe that prospects for peace have taken a giant step backwards in recent weeks, in large part because of the Goldstone Report, recently issued by the despot-controlled United Nations Human Rights Council.

This report accused Israel of war crimes, as well as possible crimes against humanity during Israel's defensive operations in Gaza last winter. From the beginning, the Council instructed the

Goldstone Commission to focus only on “aggression against the Palestinian people,” a presumption of Israeli guilt before any so-called investigation had even taken place.

Article 51 of the United Nations Charter guarantees all U.N. members the right to defend themselves against terrorism and other external threats. The Goldstone Report completely ignores this fundamental right. It also ignores the steps taken by the Israeli defense forces to minimize civilian casualties, steps that often put Israeli soldiers at increased risk. And the Goldstone Report completely ignores Hamas’ callous practice of intertwining its terrorist infrastructure within civilian population centers, hiding behind hospitals, schools, mosques, and even U.N. facilities.

The Obama administration should completely reject the Goldstone Report. The Obama administration should also take steps to explicitly link future United States contributions to the U.N. with U.N. action to implement concrete act or root out the institutionalized fraud and corruption within the U.N. bureaucracy and then, once and for all, the naked, systematic anti-United States, anti-Israeli, anti-Semitic bias within the U.N.

I know that is strong, but I mean it.

Third, I would like to express my deep, deep concern over the administration’s inaction on implementing General McChrystal’s strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. While I disagree with the President on many foreign policy questions—and I don’t think that is much of a surprise—I do believe that President Obama was right a few months ago when he declared, “The conflict in Afghanistan will not be quick or easy. But we must never forget: This is not a war of choice; this is a war of necessity. This is fundamental to the defense of our people of the United States.”

Withdrawal from Afghanistan is not an option. What I have heard over and over from witnesses before this committee is that if the Taliban is allowed to regain control of the country, the security of the world will be at much higher risk and the reputation of the United States and NATO will take years to recover.

Victory is possible. Our counterinsurgency forces are more experienced and more knowledgeable than they have ever been, and our enemy is despised by the great majority of the Afghan people. The President’s hand-picked commander, General McChrystal, has presented the President with a strategy to win the conflict, and it is inexcusable to delay.

The President needs to act now before the situation in the region deteriorates even further, and General McChrystal must come and testify before Congress so that Republicans and Democrats can ask him questions the American people want us to ask. How do you propose to win the war and get our troops home safely?

It has already been said 100 times before, but it bears repeating: Success in Afghanistan is crucial for success in Pakistan where there is a real threat of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists.

Multiple intelligence estimates have warned that al-Qaeda is actively planning attacks on the United States homeland from its safe haven in Pakistan. If either the Afghan or Pakistani Government falls to the Taliban or allows al-Qaeda to go unchallenged, that region of the world would once again be a base for terrorists

who want to kill as many of our people as they possibly can. It gets no clearer than that.

The very people who attacked us on 9/11 are plotting future attacks on us in Afghanistan and the border region in Pakistan. We must disrupt and neutralize these groups before they strike again. This is a war of necessity and, as such, we must commit the necessary effort in order to be victorious.

And, finally, I would like to briefly touch upon the broad issue of religious freedom. Religious freedom is a foundational value of the United States and the right to religious freedom is firmly enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18. A nation's adherence to this principle is now, along with others, an indication and standard bearer for good governance that protects the rights of minorities and safeguards social peace. The promotion of freedom of religion and belief has been a consistent part of the U.S. foreign policy for decades.

I recently introduced House Resolution 840 that condemns violations of religious freedom in the Middle East, calls on President Obama to renew the United States' commitment to promoting religious freedom as a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy, and urges all Middle Eastern governments to respect and defend the rights of religious minorities within their borders. I hope all of my colleagues will join me in cosponsoring this important bill.

And, once again, Mr. Chairman, thanks for calling this important hearing. I know I talked a long time, but I was trying to cover a lot of stuff. So I appreciate your understanding. Thank you very much.

And I want to tell you I look forward to hearing our distinguished witness.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Burton follows:]

**Opening Statement  
Ranking Member Dan Burton  
Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia  
“Overview of the Middle East”  
October 28, 2009**

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for calling this very important and timely hearing. There are countless issues that need to be addressed throughout the Middle East and South Asia and it's almost difficult to know where to begin.

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do nothing and continue to allow the Iranians to delay and stall, their capabilities will grow and one day we will see in the front page headlines an announcement that Iran has tested a nuclear bomb. At that point it will be far too late for the international community to do anything.

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choice. This is a war of necessity. ... This is fundamental to the defense of our people.”

Withdrawal from Afghanistan is not an option. What I have heard over and over from witnesses before this committee is that if the Taliban is allowed to regain control of the country, the security of the world will be at a much higher risk, and the reputation of the United States and NATO will take years to recover. Victory is possible. Our counterinsurgency forces are more experienced and more knowledgeable than they ever have been, and our enemy is despised by the great majority of the Afghan people. The President’s handpicked commander General McChrystal has presented the President with a strategy to win the conflict and it is inexcusable to delay. The President needs to act now before the situation in the region deteriorates even further, and General McChrystal must come and testify before Congress so that Republican and Democrats can ask him the questions the American people expect us to ask, how you propose to win the war and get our troops home safely.

It has already been said a hundred times before, but it bears repeating, success in Afghanistan is crucial for success in Pakistan; where there

is a real threat of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists. Multiple intelligence estimates have warned that al-Qaida is actively planning attacks on the U.S. homeland from its safe-haven in Pakistan. If either the Afghan or Pakistani government falls to the Taliban – or allows al-Qaida to go unchallenged – that region of the world would once again be a base for terrorists who want to kill as many of our people as they possibly can. It gets no clearer than that. The very people who attacked us on 9/11 are plotting future attacks on us in Afghanistan and the border region in Pakistan. We must disrupt and neutralize these groups before they strike again. This is a war of necessity and as such, we must commit the necessary effort in order to be victorious.

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The promotion of freedom of religion and belief has been a consistent part of U.S. foreign policy for decades. I have recently introduced House Resolution 840 that condemns violations of religious freedom in the Middle East, calls on President Obama to renew the United States' commitment to promoting religious freedom as a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy; and urges all Middle Eastern governments to respect and defend the rights of religious minorities within their borders. I hope that all of my colleagues will join me in co-sponsoring this important legislation.

Once again, Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling this important hearing and I look forward to hearing from our distinguished witness.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much.

The Ambassador has been waiting for over an hour for us because of votes, but I am going to see if we can ask each member that wants to make an opening statement if they could do it in 1 minute or so.

Mr. Wexler.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just very quickly I want to associate myself with the remarks of the chairman and the ranking member regarding Iran. Mr. Burton rightfully brings up the Goldstone Report. I think it is important to note that, in fact, the administration has opposed in many different avenues and in many different venues the Goldstone Report, the conclusions that it reached. And, in fact, the strongest response that the administration could provide is happening as we speak.

In Israel today there is the largest American-Israeli missile defense joint exercise in the history of our two nations—on the ground in Israel, 1,300 American troops. Likewise, when our NATO ally just recently disinvited the Israelis from a military exercise, a joint exercise with the United States and other nations, we unequivocally responded by saying we would not show up as well.

The level of cooperation between the United States and Israel on intelligence and military matters has never been greater, all for the purpose of security and peace, but also to maintain Israel's qualitative military edge. So I think our response from the administration on down to these disturbing events has been quite resolute.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Ms. Berkley.

Ms. BERKLEY. I am anxious to hear our witness' statement, so I think I will defer my questions until later or at least my statement until later.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you.

Mr. McMahan.

Mr. MCMAHON. I, too, Mr. Chairman, in the interest of time, will submit my statement to the record and just associate myself with the remarks that have been brought forth so far—especially yours, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Carnahan.

Mr. CARNAHAN. I, too, will pass and take this up during questioning. So we can get started with the witness.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Costa.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will take all 5 minutes—no.

I do appreciate the comments that the chairman and the ranking member made, and I, too, am concerned with the challenges we are facing in the Middle East today. And I look forward to the testimony of Ambassador Feltman, and let us begin there.

Mr. ACKERMAN. To have five Members of Congress pass because they are anxious to hear you is the greatest sign of respect I have seen around here in a long time.

Ambassador Jeffrey D. Feltman has appeared before this subcommittee on several occasions, but this will be his first appearance since being sworn in as assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern Affairs on August 18 of this year.

Congratulations, Mr. Secretary.

Ambassador Feltman ascended to his current position having been acting assistant secretary of state since February, and since December 2008 principal deputy assistant secretary. Previously, the Ambassador served as Ambassador to Lebanon, as a senior official in the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq for 14 months, as acting principal officer at the U.S. Consul General in Jerusalem.

A career member of the U.S. Foreign Service since January 1986, Ambassador Feltman brings a wealth of hard-won experience to his current position. We are fortunate to have him in the service of our country. We are delighted to welcome him back to our subcommittee today.

Mr. Ambassador.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JEFFREY D. FELTMAN, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Mr. FELTMAN. Chairman Ackerman, Ranking Member Burton, distinguished members of the committee, thank you very much for inviting me to appear before you today. My colleagues in the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and I very much appreciate the committee's abiding interest in and attention to our Nation's priorities in the Middle East.

I prepared a full statement for the record, so I will make a brief oral statement now and then look forward to any questions.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Without objection, your full statement will be in the record.

Mr. FELTMAN. As the committee is well aware, as the opening statements certainly indicated, the issues, the opportunities, the challenges that we face in the Middle East are among the most consequential for our Nation's security and national interests. They are among the most difficult; international peace and stability, nuclear proliferation, energy security, economic growth, and protection of human rights are all affected greatly by developments in this region we are discussing today.

This administration is vigorously pursuing a comprehensive peace in the region, which we believe is not only in the interest of the parties of the conflict, but in America's and in the world's interests.

The administration recognized from Day One that working to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict is key to fostering stability, to addressing the security needs of our allies and to promoting United States interests in the Middle East, South Asia, and the broader Muslim world from Morocco all the way to Indonesia.

Achieving a comprehensive peace will be challenging. The U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace, Senator George Mitchell, knows all too well that committed, persevering and patient diplomacy will be required. Progress is quietly, but steadily being made, and we very much appreciate the support and assistance of this committee and Congress more generally for the work that we are doing.

Our commitment to Israel's security and well-being remains unshakable. We believe that our pursuit of comprehensive peace in the region will make Israel more secure, the region more secure

and stable, and in doing so, will also help promote American security and interests.

Resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, of course, will not automatically resolve the other challenges that we face in the region, such as those outlined by the opening statements, posed by Iran, just as resolving concerns about Iran will not automatically produce an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict. But efforts on these fronts and on others are mutually reinforcing.

Like all of you, we are all watching developments with Iran very closely. The administration is implementing a strategy of principled engagement with Iran, where we deal with the Government of Iran directly and work to resolve diplomatically the international concerns about its nuclear program.

The October 1st P5+1 meeting in Geneva with the Iranians, in which we participated actively, was a constructive first step, but it must be followed by constructive actions, by tangible steps. We look to Iran to respond quickly and positively to efforts by the P5+1 and the IAEA to make progress on the commitments on October 1st and to build confidence in negotiations. But the P5+1 countries have made clear that our approach runs on two tracks, and we are prepared to pursue increased pressure if negotiations stall or prove fruitless.

The opportunity for engagement is genuine, but it will not be open-ended if Iran continues to refuse to fulfill its obligations. We are not going to talk simply for talking's sake.

We are also concerned—as your opening statements indicated you are as well, Mr. Chairman—about Iran's other policies, including Iran's abysmal human rights record: The disturbing aftermath of Iranian elections, which saw hundreds arrested and scores killed, as well as Iran's support for terrorist groups across the broader region.

One American citizen, Kian Tajbakhsh, was among those convicted and tried in the summer's show trial. He was recently sentenced to 15 years for baseless charges. Other Americans, including the three American hikers, remain imprisoned in Iran with no charges and not even any contact with their families; and we have made clear to Iran that they should all immediately be allowed to rejoin their families in the United States. We continue to call on Iran to resolve the 2-year-plus case of missing American citizen Robert Levinson.

Turning our attention to Iraq, the United States stands by all Iraqis at this crucial time leading up to national elections, and we pledge to join them in working together to combat all forms of violence and attempts at intimidation. The devastating bombings against government targets on October 25 and those on August 19 were truly horrific, but they do nothing to shake the determination of the Iraqi Government to build a peaceful and prosperous country or America's determination to help the Iraqis do just that.

In fact, violence in Iraq remains at levels significantly lower than that of 2006 and 2007, and we will continue to transition from a U.S. military- to a U.S. civilian-led mission in Iraq. We also remain committed to meeting the withdrawal time line set forth in the security agreement that we concluded at the end of last year.

The United States commitment to Lebanon's sovereignty and independence remains firm and will not be compromised by our engagement with any other party in the region. Mindful of Lebanon's delicate internal situation, we also recognize that there can be no lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict reached at Lebanon's expense. We continue to support the efforts of Prime Minister-Designate Hariri to form a government on the basis of Lebanon's legitimate elections held last June.

The administration has initiated a strategy of principled engagement with Syria, and I and others have made several trips to Damascus this year, opening lines of communication. But the Syrians must realize that our ability to expand our engagement with them depends on the level of cooperation they show in areas of concern to the United States, including respect for Lebanon's sovereignty and control of foreign fighters seeking to enter Iraq.

We continue to develop our strategic relationships with other partners in the Gulf, North Africa and throughout the region. Our friends in the region remain critical to our energy and our defense interests, and we consult with them frequently on an array of issues of mutual concern.

The challenges of the region are difficult ones: Persistent conflict and insecurity, an acute and impending increase in the youth demographic, and democratic institutions of governance that are often absent or weak. President Obama and Secretary Clinton have put us on the path of forging a new beginning for United States relations with Muslim communities in the Middle East and around the world. With our friends and allies, we are reinvigorating more comprehensive partnerships, reaching beyond governments to touch the lives of individuals through economic, educational and scientific cooperation. Together, we can forge solutions to shared problems and seize the opportunities for progress that exist in the region.

I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your past and your ongoing support of the efforts of our brave diplomats and our troops across the Middle East, often serving in the most difficult and challenging circumstances.

And now, I look forward to taking your questions.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much, Ambassador.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Feltman follows:]

REMARKS FOR THE RECORD  
AMBASSADOR JEFFREY D. FELTMAN  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS  
BEFORE THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE  
MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA  
OCTOBER 28, 2009

Chairman Ackerman, Ranking Member Burton, Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today. My colleagues in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and I appreciate the Committee's abiding interest in and attention to our nation's priorities and goals in the region. I am pleased to present the Committee with an overview of the Administration's policies and our relations with the countries of the Middle East.

Events in the Middle East and U.S. involvement there often have significant policy and security implications that reach far beyond the region. International peace and stability, nuclear proliferation, energy security, economic growth, and human rights all are affected greatly by developments in the region. President Obama and Secretary Clinton are implementing a foreign policy that best enables us to respond to the clear imperatives, seize new opportunities, and address the serious challenges that we face in the Middle East and around the world.

Partnership has been a watchword of this Administration's foreign policy. President Obama's call for greater openness and partnership in our relations with other nations reflects a belief deeply held by this Administration: to face the complicated challenges confronting us today, we need to work together with others more than ever before.

And just as that holds for our foreign relations – reaching out to traditional and non-traditional partners in our diplomatic efforts – it could not be truer within our own government: teamwork, across our departments, agencies, offices, and branches of government, is essential. The State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs collaborates intensively with other regional and functional bureaus in the Department, with distinguished Special Envoys, Representatives and Advisors appointed by the President and the Secretary of State, with USAID and other civilian agencies and the Department of Defense, and with the Congress,

particularly with members of this Subcommittee, to ensure a comprehensive, coordinated approach to fulfilling our strategic goals.

### **Strategic Imperatives in the Region and Middle East Peace**

Chief among our goals in the Middle East is to bring about peace in a region that has faced decades of conflict. While cognizant of the challenges ahead, this Administration believes that comprehensive peace – peace not only between Israel and the Palestinians, but also between Israel and Syria, and Israel and Lebanon, and the full normalization of relations between Israel and its neighbors – is not only in the interests of the parties to these conflicts; it is in America’s interest, and it is in the world’s interest. Achievement of this goal will require collective action and we are working closely with countries across the region to create an environment that supports peaceful resolution. At the same time, we are addressing the security needs of our friends and allies.

The resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the two-state solution is central to our goal of comprehensive peace: two states living side by side in peace and security – a strong, Jewish state of Israel, with true security for all Israelis; and an independent, viable, and contiguous Palestinian state that ends the occupation that began in 1967 and unleashes the full potential of the Palestinian people. President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton are deeply and personally committed to realizing this goal. On behalf of the President and Secretary of State, Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell has been working closely with Israeli and Palestinian leaders, regional leaders and allies, our partners in the Quartet, and others.

This is a challenging issue with a tangled history. We all know that no one high-level meeting will resolve this conflict. But progress is steadily and quietly being made, and the President and his team will continue to approach this effort with perseverance and determination.

Both in public and in private, President Obama has made clear that the negotiations should cover all permanent status issues – borders, security, Jerusalem, and refugees – and result in the establishment of an independent, viable, and contiguous Palestinian state, alongside a secure Israel.

While there are differences in the parties’ positions on the core issues, that is true of every negotiation. If we accepted that such differences would remain

unbridgeable, no conflict would ever be resolved. And there is a firm basis for discussions to resume based on the terms of reference of earlier negotiations and the parties' previous agreements.

We seek to create a dialogue that facilitates the compromises necessary to ensure the long-term interests of both sides. While it is critical that neither side hold out for the perfect formula, it is also important that both sides have a stake in the framework for the negotiations. The issues at hand can only be resolved through direct talks.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to the U.S.-Israel relationship, which is based not only on our common interests in the region, but on our common values. The Administration's commitment to Israel's security and well being is unshakable. We continue to consult closely with Israel to ensure its continued Qualitative Military Edge throughout the region. In FY09, with your help and leadership, the Administration disbursed \$2.55 billion in FMF to Israel and our FY10 commitment stands at \$2.775 billion. Additionally, our assistance and our diplomatic engagement region-wide help ensure Israel's security. We have also consistently worked to ensure that Israel is treated fairly at the UN and other international organizations.

This Administration is also vigorously pursuing comprehensive peace in the region, which we fundamentally believe is in our interests, as well as Israel's long-term interest. As the President said, the United States does Israel no favors when we fail to couple an unwavering commitment to its security and well-being with an insistence that Israel respect the legitimate claims and rights of Palestinians.

Resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict will not automatically resolve other challenges in the region, such as those posed by Iran, just as neutralizing those concerns will not automatically resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But efforts on these fronts and others are mutually reinforcing.

Making peace between Israelis and Palestinians – and between Israel and its Arab neighbors – strengthens the U.S. in responding to other foreign policy imperatives in the region. It serves U.S. national security interests and strengthens regional security and stability.

Among the other vital issues we must address in the region, nuclear non-proliferation is key to our long-term security and the stability of the region. We

continue to advance our non-proliferation aims internationally by seeking to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery, as well as weapon-usable nuclear and radiological materials and expertise, while ensuring that states that do seek civil nuclear power are able to exercise that right while they uphold their commitment to exclusively peaceful applications.

We are actively engaged in countering extremism by working with our partners to pursue terrorists and by discrediting extremist ideologies through promotion of social and economic development, good governance, rule of law, and resolution of regional conflicts.

We are also building constructive partnerships between the people of the United States and the Middle East that support entrepreneurship, science, education, health, and other shared goals.

While we must continue to strive for energy security by developing renewable sources and alternatives to fossil fuel use at home, we also must ensure international markets have access to affordable energy resources. Air and sea lanes must be protected and lines of communication to and from the region kept open.

The United States must be ready to support and work with the governments and people in the region, promoting reform and liberalization to increase representativeness, inclusiveness, and respect for the rights of all people, including women and religious minorities.

### **Regional Challenges and Threats**

A range of serious challenges confront the Middle East and North Africa – among them, acute demographic challenges, notably a youth bulge that will necessitate the creation of millions of new jobs over the next decade. Conflicts, including continued attacks in Iraq and violence and separatism in Yemen, among others, continue to destabilize the region and detract resources from other priorities. Human trafficking, inadequate human rights protections, and absent or weak democratic institutions persist across much of the Near East. Other cross-border threats – from public health epidemics to terrorist organizations, including Al-Qaeda affiliates – are aggravated by emerging demographic trends that undermine human security and progress in the region.

These issues not only confront the people and governments of the region, but also affect our own policies and national security interests. Development and government capacity deficits can contribute to radicalization, inhibit the emergence of a robust civil society, and hinder opportunities for economic growth and trade. Conflicts fuel extremism and interfere with our ability to crystallize positive changes in the way the United States is viewed in the region. We will continue to bolster our strategic relationships in the region and the capacity of stakeholders at all levels to work together to overcome these challenges.

### **New Opportunities**

President Obama has created a genuine opening and opportunity for a new beginning to our relationship with Muslims in the Middle East and around the world.

The President said, in both Ankara and in Cairo, that, where in the past we may have focused in this region more narrowly, through a lens of defeating extremists or securing oil and gas supplies, we now seek a broader engagement, on the basis of common interests and mutual respect. The President's vision includes new and reinvigorated partnerships in the fields of business, science and technology, education, public health, and with civil society across the region.

Following the President's speech, we initiated hundreds of conversations with community, civil society, and political leaders around the world. We have listened carefully. The expectations in the region are very high for U.S. action to follow up on the speech. With heightened expectations come certain risks, but also important opportunities.

The Department of State and the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs play an important role in helping to fulfill that vision and ensure the President's words are backed by deeds. We will continue important ongoing public diplomacy efforts, including educational and cultural exchanges, which in FY 2008 totaled over \$100 million and involved thousands of youth and professionals. We remain active in our outreach efforts to regional news outlets, encompassing traditional and new media. Since 2007, the U.S. has issued more than 71,400 student and exchange visitor visas to applicants from the Middle East. We are particularly interested in supporting employment-focused approaches to education and partnerships with the private sector to tackle comprehensively the obstacles that hinder economic growth and development in the region. Coordination through international fora, such as

the G8's Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENA), enhances our reach and effectiveness in these and other areas. Secretary Clinton will be leading the U.S. delegation, of which I will be a part, to the annual BMENA Forum for the Future in order to demonstrate our enduring commitment to creating sustainable partnerships that lead to reform, progress, and prosperity in the region.

A principal vehicle for achieving our objectives is the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). Through MEPI, we are answering the President's call to intensify and deepen our engagement in the region. MEPI is directly engaging with and investing in the people of the Middle East and North Africa through programs focused on strengthening civil society and the rule of law, empowering women and youth, creating educational opportunities, and fostering economic development and entrepreneurship.

MEPI's Local Grants Program directly supports the efforts of NGOs, the private sector, and academic institutions that are working to advance educational and professional opportunities for people in the region. Through this unique, fast-delivery program, MEPI fuels initiatives and ideas developed by organizations and civil society leaders working to advance positive change and reform in the Middle East and North Africa.

MEPI's support strengthens the capacity of those who serve as the region's most dedicated and successful agents of change – the people themselves. We've seen progress in the region through our efforts. For example, MEPI funds provided for the training for more than 6,000 women candidates in preparation for Morocco's June 2009 municipal elections, in which the government had set aside 12 percent of the seats for women. Women won 13 percent of the seats, surpassing the quota and marking a dramatic increase from only 0.5 percent of seats they held previously. This type of activity responds to the President's call to employ foreign assistance to catalyze local action that will ultimately help to build sustainable democracies.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) provides another key vehicle for furthering regional goals that are vital to U.S. foreign policy. Through programs in the region – that totaled more than \$2 billion in FY 2009 – USAID helps local governments to deliver services; supports private sector-led economic growth; delivers humanitarian aid; and works with governments to strengthen their capacity to respond to the needs of the people of the region.

**Principled Engagement**

Let me turn to our strategy of engagement, which the President first laid out in his inaugural address and has since repeated in interviews and speeches across the United States and around the world.

Through our strategy of principled engagement we are greatly strengthening our position and advancing our objectives, vis-à-vis both our friends and our adversaries. With our allies we are reinvigorating more comprehensive partnerships – reaching beyond governments to touch the lives of individuals through economic, educational, and scientific cooperation. We are demonstrating our desire to work with our allies and engage in full cooperation across a wide range of issues.

Our engagement, based on mutual respect and mutual interests, increases our power, our influence, our options, and ultimately our chances for success in achieving our objectives. Even in the cases of adversaries or nations with which we disagree, a strategy of engagement pays important dividends. When we lead with diplomacy we gain insight into others' intentions and calculations. As Secretary Clinton has said, we also gain the possibility, however remote, that governments will ultimately alter their policies on issues where we disagree.

By pursuing the option for dialogue and proving our openness to a negotiated resolution of differences, we bolster the willingness of our allies to join us in exerting pressure should those negotiations fail. Our efforts in the context of international fora are met with greater readiness and receptivity by other countries, opening new channels to mitigate conflicts and encourage international actors to adhere to their international responsibilities.

**Iran**

Our strategy of engagement in general takes us to the specific case of Iran.

Our primary goal is clear: to prevent Iran from achieving a nuclear weapons capability. In coordination with our friends and allies, we are using a range of diplomatic tools including direct, principled engagement and continued pressure to change Iran's strategic calculus so that it meets its international obligations on its nuclear program and can enjoy the rights that come with being a responsible member of the international community.

While we remain committed to reaching a diplomatic solution through meaningful engagement with Iran, we know that pressure plays a role in persuading Iran of the costs of its destabilizing activities. In case negotiations do not produce the necessary results, we are also developing our planning for international action to pressure Iran to change its policies. This is the rationale behind the P5+1 dual-track policy, a balance between engagement and pressure, to persuade the Iranian government that its current approach is not in its best interest.

As the President has said, the P5+1 meeting with Iran on October 1 was a constructive beginning, but determination of whether Iran is serious about addressing international concerns will depend on Iran's follow-through on its commitments. The recent revelation of a previously-undisclosed enrichment facility at Qom contributed to the deep concerns and unity of the international community. Tangible steps by Iran are needed to demonstrate that its nuclear program is exclusively peaceful. In Vienna last week, the IAEA, Russia, the U.S., France, and Iran met to finalize the implementation terms of the IAEA's proposal, based on the Geneva agreement in principle, to respond to Iran's request to acquire fuel for its IAEA-safe-guarded Tehran Research Reactor. Russia, France and the United States have accepted the draft IAEA agreement, which if implemented by Iran, would be an important step to build confidence. We hope that Iran will respond positively to the agreement developed by the IAEA as a confidence building measure. Turning to the IAEA investigation of the Iranian nuclear program, IAEA inspectors have inspected the Qom facility this week and we expect Iran to provide the IAEA with full and unfettered access for its investigation and we await the IAEA's report.

The Tehran Research Reactor project and the IAEA's inspection of the Qom facility occur in the context of the international community's broader concerns about Iran's nuclear program, which will remain the focus of the P5+1 process.

International concerns about Iran are also broader than the nuclear file. Iran remains the most active state sponsor of terrorism. Its support for groups such as Hamas, Hizballah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, members of the Taliban, and insurgents in Iraq continue to destabilize the region. Iran's support for terrorist groups has a direct impact on international efforts to promote peace and threatens regional economic stability. Moreover, it undermines the trust of the international

community and weakens its confidence in Iran's ability to play a positive role in the region.

We encourage Iran to maintain constructive and peaceful relations with its neighbors. We also continue to appeal to countries in the region, whose territory and air space Iran has used to re-supply terrorist groups, to help stop the flow of materiel and other support to terrorist groups.

When we talk about Iran meeting its international responsibilities, we are not just talking about its nuclear program or support for terrorism; we are also talking about human rights. Much like Iran's failure to adhere to its international obligations on the nuclear front, Iran has failed to adhere to its international obligations to protect and advance human rights and universal principles and freedoms - freedoms provided for in its own constitution, reflected in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and codified in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a party.

We remain deeply concerned about the brutal manner in which the Iranian government handled peaceful post-election protests. We call on Iran to live up to its international obligations to advance universal principles, including freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of worship, and the right to due process for all those seeking justice. The Iranian government's flagrant disregard of its international human rights commitments has never been clearer than in the weeks and months following the June 12<sup>th</sup> election.

Of particular concern is the Iranian government's use of public show trials to deal with the aftermath of the June elections and designed to extract forced confessions from hundreds of its citizens. Iran's sentencing of Iranian-American scholar, Kian Tajbakhsh to 15 years in prison is just one recent example of Iran's failure to ensure due process safeguards as guaranteed in its own constitution, as well as in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

In discussing Iran today, I must reiterate our concern about the fate of American citizens currently detained or missing there. We continue to urge the Iranian government to release Mr. Tajbakhsh, and the three American hikers, Shane Bauer, Sarah Shourd, and Josh Fattal, who have been held without charges for more than 80 days. We also continue to call for the immediate release of Reza Taghavi, a 71 years-old Iranian American who has been held in detention without charges since May 2008 despite his failing health. We also continue to press Iran

to use all means to determine the whereabouts and ensure the safe return of Robert Levinson. Our goal is to ensure the safe return of all these individuals to the United States as quickly as possible so that they can be reunited with their families.

### **Iraq**

The United States remains committed to bolstering Iraq as a sovereign nation and supporting its progress on a path to self-reliance, peace, and prosperity. Iraqis themselves are making efforts to promote domestic peace, national unity, and regional integration. We continue to support those efforts of our Iraqi partners.

An example of our commitment to a better future for Iraq is the U.S.-Iraq Business and Investment Conference held on October 20-21 that attracted over 1,000 participants. It was an opportunity to mark the progress that has been made and a chance for the American and international business communities to take advantage of significant business opportunities in Iraq. Secretary Clinton and Prime Minister Maliki opened the event. They highlighted the exciting potential in Iraq and the desire of Iraqis to build a more prosperous, peaceful future for themselves. Secretary Clinton commended Iraqi officials for recent steps to improve the investment climate and urged additional steps so that Iraq could compete successfully for global investment funds. She stressed that the conference was a tangible outcome of U.S. commitments under the Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA) to move toward the goal of a stable, sovereign, and self-reliant Iraq. We have made other commitments to Iraq as well. As you may recall, the President announced in February that we would continue to help Iraq train its Security Forces and develop its government and economy.

We have expressed our condolences to the victims of Sunday's brutal attacks in Baghdad and for the tragic loss of so many lives. The United States strongly condemns the bombings at the Iraqi Ministry of Justice and other government offices and the horrific bombings of August 19. These bombings and some of the recent attacks on the U.S. military and Iraqi civilians demonstrate that Iraq is not yet secure and there will be difficult days ahead. We stand by all Iraqis, at this crucial time leading up to national elections, and we pledge to join them in working together to combat all forms of violence and attempts at intimidation. It is worth noting that violence in Iraq remains substantially reduced from 2006-2007 levels, and the capacity of Iraq's Security Forces is improving.

Iraqis continue to make political progress. Recent provincial and regional elections were conducted peacefully and successfully. Upcoming national parliamentary elections in early 2010 are expected to be a watershed event in Iraq's young democracy. Of critical importance for Iraq's democracy is passage of an election law to govern the upcoming national elections. Iraq's political leaders are seriously working on such a law, but have already exceeded their self-imposed deadline. We are actively urging all parties to seek compromise language on the issues that divide them, so that Iraq may hold timely and democratic polls this coming January.

Progress in Iraq is significant and hopeful, but not without challenges, including Arab-Kurd disagreements that continue to cause tensions. To address those issues we are actively supporting efforts to settle boundary disputes and develop the vital oil sector. We urge all sides to abstain from violence and to work through peaceful channels to resolve differences.

The Strategic Framework Agreement serves as the basis for our relationship with Iraq as we move forward. In July, Secretary Clinton and Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki co-chaired the Higher Coordinating Committee of the SFA and reaffirmed our mutual commitment to the civilian partnership it envisions. We will direct U.S. assistance to help re-build the capacity of the Iraqi government in many critical areas, including better delivery of public services, economic reform, decreasing sectarian violence and strengthening the rule of law and respect for human rights. We will continue to work with the Iraqi government and the international community to assist displaced Iraqis and create conditions that support their voluntary and sustainable return.

U.S. combat forces withdrew from cities and villages on June 30. We will honor our commitment under the Security Agreement to remove all U.S. forces by December 31, 2011, and the President has made clear his intent to remove combat troops by August 2010. He reiterated this pledge when he met with Prime Minister Maliki in the Oval Office on October 20. The Department of State and Embassy Baghdad are actively engaged in the important transition from a military focus toward a civilian and capacity-building focus. We are working closely with General Odierno and our military colleagues and other U.S. government agencies to ensure the transition is smooth and successful. The support of Congress will be vital in the effort to obtain the resources our men and women on the ground need to do their jobs and build a strong foundation for our new relationship with Iraq.

**Syria and Lebanon**

The President has endorsed a sustained, principled dialogue with Syria to advance the interests of the United States and our allies. We believe that Syria and the United States share some common interests, including a comprehensive peace in the region, and that Syria can potentially play a constructive role in realizing our common goals, provided Syria addresses a number of key concerns.

As part of our policy of engagement, I have visited Syria on several occasions and Special Envoy Mitchell has twice met with Syrian President Bashar al-Asad. Our initial meetings were essential to underscore the U.S. commitment toward advancing regional peace and establishing a constructive atmosphere for dialogue. Having laid this groundwork, we now want to move beyond dialogue and toward action in the areas of cooperation and concern that we have identified. While we have made some modest headway with the Syrians in this regard and we believe that there is further potential for a positive, constructive U.S.-Syrian relationship. For that potential to be fully realized, however, we will need to see Syria address our concerns about some of its regional policies, such as support for terrorist organizations like Hizballah and Hamas.

In Lebanon, we hope to see a quick resolution to the challenges that have impeded the government-formation process. This is a process for the Lebanese to carry out in accordance with their constitution and without outside interference. In their June elections, the Lebanese sent a clear message in favor of Lebanon's independence. Expectations are currently high that a cabinet could be announced within the coming days. We certainly hope this is the case. The Lebanese people have waited too long for their government to return to the work of ensuring security, economic development, and political dialogue for all Lebanese citizens. We commend Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri and President Michel Sleiman for their stewardship during the government formation process. We look forward to working with the next Lebanese government and reiterate that our support for Lebanese sovereignty will not be compromised by our engagement with any other party.

We remain extremely troubled about Hizballah's role in Lebanon, especially its maintenance of a vast arsenal of increasingly sophisticated weaponry. We are also gravely concerned by Hizballah's operations outside Lebanon, including their activities inside Egypt, and in Azerbaijan where two Hizballah operatives were recently sentenced to 15 years in prison. Hizballah's actions in Lebanon and

abroad contravene Security Council Resolution 1559 and 1701, are inconsistent with Lebanon's democratic processes, stoke sectarian tensions, and threaten to spark renewed conflict in the region. We reiterate our calls, echoed by the UN Secretary-General in his most recent report on Lebanon, for Hizballah to lay down its arms and respect the Lebanese constitution, the Taif Agreement, and relevant Security Council resolutions. All other parties in the region, particularly Syria and Lebanon, should also help ensure the implementation of relevant Security Council Resolutions.

### **Regional Partners**

We continue to develop our strategic relationships in the Gulf and throughout the region. Through our engagement with regional partners, and with other governmental and non-governmental actors around the world, the U.S. is gaining the political and material support to deal effectively with the challenges we face.

We share a common vision of a stable, peaceful, and prosperous Middle East with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. We are committed to working with our Gulf partners to seek an end to persistent conflict in the region, in particular achieving a lasting peace between Israel and its neighbors. We continue to support military, law enforcement, and regulatory mechanisms and promote robust anti-terrorism cooperation with our Gulf partners to stem extremism and deny safe haven for terrorists throughout the broader region.

With our important allies Egypt and Jordan, the only two Arab countries that currently have peace treaties with Israel, we are working on a broad range of shared initiatives, including promoting a comprehensive Middle East peace, countering terrorism, promoting good governance, respect for human rights, and economic prosperity.

President Obama and Secretary Clinton have acknowledged the contribution of Saudi Arabia as the author of the Arab Peace Initiative. It is important, though, that Arab states recognize this initiative as an important beginning, and not an end, to their responsibilities to help create the conditions for peace.

The U.S. must also engage with our partners to address the troubling developments in Yemen and ensure that critical stabilization, development, and humanitarian assistance objectives are met. We are seriously concerned by the

violence and unrest of recent weeks and months. We will follow a two-pronged approach, involving security as well as humanitarian and stabilization assistance, to improve the government of Yemen's ability to maintain stability and prevent the country from becoming a safe haven for terrorists. A weak central government in Yemen, as well as the increased presence of Al-Qaeda, are two significant challenges that the United States must continue to address.

In conclusion, even a quick survey of the Near East region reveals the magnitude of the issues and challenges we face there: the search for peace in a region riven by decades of conflict; the security of our friends and allies; the protection of our nation's energy supply; the moral imperative to confront global climate change; the promotion of democracy, women's empowerment, human rights, and social and political progress; the fight against human trafficking; the cultivation of new markets for American commerce; and the expansion of education and economic opportunity. Our foreign policy in the Near East will affect the future security and well-being of the American people, the people of the region, and indeed, of the world. Our diplomats serving in this region, often in combat zones alongside the brave men and women in the U.S. Armed Forces, are pursuing these goals vigorously every day. As Assistant Secretary, I am deeply grateful for the support this committee has shown them.

Thank you for that support, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for giving me the opportunity to lay out the pressing issues, and our vital goals in the region. I look forward to addressing any questions the Committee may have.

Mr. ACKERMAN. In your statement you said, with regard to Iran, that we are pursuing a two-track approach. Why not a comprehensive approach? Why not all of the things that I mentioned? Why is multiple choice not "all of the above," just "A and B"?

Mr. FELTMAN. The dual-track approach I mentioned is one that we are pursuing with the P5+1 partners. And it is focused primarily on the nuclear file that causes so much concern in the region and globally.

But let me assure you, Mr. Chairman, that we have a pretty comprehensive understanding of the problems that Iran's behavior poses, and we are addressing these in different ways. I will just mention four problems.

One is Iran's nuclear ambition. Big problem.

A second is Iran's repression of its own people, its violation of its own people's human rights.

Mr. ACKERMAN. We will stipulate that you have made those points and that they are clear. I am talking about the approach to those problems.

Why not have a policy that we are not only helping, but utilizing the fact that they have this Green Movement going on over there?

Why not utilize the fact that they have all these other countries that are living in fear and trepidation of them every single day, and work to line them up?

Why not give an assurance, Truman-like, to as many countries as we can there that we are their protector and will protect them against any threat by Iran under the following terms and conditions? And put in maybe a word about participating in sanctions or anything else that might fit in that?

Why not all of these things at once?

Mr. FELTMAN. Mr. Chairman, I believe we are addressing these issues that you have mentioned.

For example, there is much greater international emphasis now.

Mr. ACKERMAN. With all due respect, I have not heard an utterance about the Green Movement there, so I don't know how you are pursuing it unless—are we sending secret messages to the Green Movement or something?

Mr. FELTMAN. On the Green Movement, per se, of course this was an indigenous Iranian movement of the Iranian people very heroically going out on the street. It was not anything orchestrated by the international community.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Have we said that?

Mr. FELTMAN. Yes.

Mr. ACKERMAN. To?

Mr. FELTMAN. I think that we have been clear.

Mr. ACKERMAN. We have been saying it to each other.

Mr. FELTMAN. I think we all recognize that the Iranians very courageously have taken to the street after elections, are looking to see confirmation of some kind of legitimacy of their governing institutions.

We now have the opportunity, and we have used it, to speak to the Iranians directly about our concerns of what we saw afterwards. That was one of the messages that was delivered to the Iranians directly on October 1.

We continue to provide support to civil society in Iran and across the region to create space for civil society voices to be heard, to be protected. We continue to look for other international fora in which we can highlight the abysmal practices that Iran—

Mr. ACKERMAN. I want to move on in this, but I will just make the point one more time.

It would have been very helpful, I think—certainly not while it was occurring, because it would have made the regime's point that the thing is U.S.- or Western-inspired. But afterwards, which includes today and tomorrow, it might not be a bad idea to let people know verbally—out loud, for all the world to see, including them, the kind of support, at least talk—that we appreciate what they are doing and that we are inspired by their courage.

You know, some statement. It doesn't have to be what I said, but something would certainly be helpful to let them know they are not alone. Because, you know, I think everybody understands that that is probably in the interest of moving the ball forward except we are not going to move the ball forward unless there is somebody there that appreciates its being moved forward and these people get some kind of encouragement.

Let me ask you a question about Lebanon, and then we will move on.

In two areas where you are looking to improve our relations with Syria—our relations, as well as the Israeli-Syrian peace agreement dialogue or whatever—are we going to be willing to pay for that in Lebanese coin?

Mr. FELTMAN. The answer is unequivocal. No.

Our discussions with the Syrians, our dialogue with the Syrians is not going to come at the expense of Lebanon's sovereignty. We are not trading away Lebanese sovereignty in order to gain something with Syria. Absolutely not.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Great. I wanted to hear that on the record.

Is the administration still committed to the full implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701?

Mr. FELTMAN. 1701 is actually the basis, the foundation stone, of our policy with Lebanon. And we saw another violation of 1701 yesterday that just heightens our concern and the need to see that resolution fully implemented.

The rocket was fired from Lebanon into Israel last night. The Israelis responded. It is a reminder that we need to reinvigorate this resolution, we need to see this fully implemented by all parties.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Lastly, is the administration going to support the Special Tribunal for Lebanon until it finishes its work and make no deals with any party that would jeopardize the Tribunal's future?

Mr. FELTMAN. We are fully committed to supporting the Tribunal until it finishes its work.

We are not involved in the Tribunal, which is as it should be. This is not a political tribunal. This is to bring justice to an unsolved assassination case and, hopefully, to bring the end of the era of impunity, and we will be fully supportive of that tribunal.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

Mr. Burton.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I guess, first of all, these comments I am going to make are not directed at you, Ambassador. You have got a tough job and I appreciate that.

But the frustration level among a lot of us—and it goes across party lines, I think, although people on the other side may not be as willing to make some of the statements that I will.

The Obama administration, to me, really hasn't taken a strong position on Iran. Iran is the one that has got its finger into so many pies over in the Middle East it isn't funny. And while we are talking about some kind of a negotiation process, they continue down that path, I believe, toward a nuclear weapons program.

And what really bothers me is that we have said, you know, we are going to continue to try to find a path to peace. And it reminds me—as I said earlier today in our other hearing about Lord Chamberlain, Munich, Clinton talking to the North Koreans trying to work things out—these people who are despots, who have a goal in mind in Iran, is to destroy Israel, as well as possibly the United States and they are supporting terrorist organizations, Hezbollah, Hamas and God only knows who else.

We ought to be stating in a very, very strong way that while we are willing to negotiate with them, there is a limit to our patience, and that we are going to move and we are going to support Israel in moving to make sure they don't develop this nuclear weapons program.

What they have said in Geneva and elsewhere, they ring hollow to me and they still are kind of backing and vacillating around that. They need to know very clearly where the United States and our allies stand, and they are not getting the message.

I mean, you know, I remember back in Lebanon, or in Libya, when Muammar Qadhafi was rattling his sabers and everything and Reagan kept warning them that this was not right, that we weren't going to allow this to happen. And then we moved, and we bombed him, and you didn't hear any more from Muammar Qadhafi until just recently because he knew the United States was resolute of purpose.

And that is what we need to do now with Iran. We need to let them know that if they continue down this path toward a nuclear development program that will endanger our ally, Israel, will destabilize Iraq, the whole Middle East, then they have to know that we are willing to support Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel and we are going to do whatever has to be done to stop them.

They are a terrorist state, and what bothers me is that there has not been any definitive statement made by this administration. And, quite frankly, we didn't do as much in the last administration as we should have. We should have been very, very straightforward and let them know exactly what the price was going to be if they kept—if they were going to keep heading down the path they were on.

So I am not going to ask any questions, except to say that I hope that you as the ambassador and a person who has great expertise in that area will carry back the message to the administration that—let's send them a direct message: Look, we want to work with you. We want to stop this nuclear development program. But

if you don't move, even though we are talking about sanctions and all that sort of thing right now, which may or may not happen, if you continue down that path and our intelligence-gathering capability indicates you are going on with this development program, you are going to pay a heck of a price.

And we are not talking about damaging individual citizens over there, or killing people who are good friends of the United States who live in Iran, people who really like the United States; but those people who are in charge, those sites that are developing nuclear capabilities and nuclear weapons, they are going to be our targets and we are going to go after them.

Once they know we mean business, like Muammar Qadhafi did, I think you will see a change. But until that time, just this hyperbole and these words ain't going to cut it.

And, with that, Mr. Chairman, thank you for yielding me this time.

You can respond if you like, but what I would like to hear is that you are going to send them this clear message.

Mr. FELTMAN. Ranking Member Burton, I will certainly take the message back to the administration, as you request, and take your views back.

You know, we do want a diplomatic solution to this. But let me make a couple of comments.

Diplomatic solution doesn't mean soft. Diplomatic solution doesn't mean that we roll over and play dead. Diplomatic solution means we work multilaterally, we work bilaterally, we line up alternatives. So we do want a diplomatic solution.

But we also agree with you 100 percent: This cannot be an open-ended process of talking for talking's sake.

Mr. BURTON. Let me just say this and I will be quiet.

As long as they think that we are not going to act, they will just keep playing us like a deck of cards. They have to know there is a fist there and that fist will be utilized if they don't stop this nonsense.

With that, I yield back.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Wexler.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I don't view my station in life as being that where I always have to respond to Mr. Burton, as much as I respect him, but yesterday the National Security Advisor of the United States of America, I think a gentleman we would all agree is a fairly serious man, General Jones, stood in front of a group of people and said with respect to Iran, outlining the policy of engagement, at the end said, but understand all options are on the table.

I think adults understand what General Jones means when he says all options are on the table.

Mr. Ambassador, if I could, in the context of what I hope is an understanding that I support 110 percent the efforts that the administration has undergone with respect to the Israelis and the Palestinians, I would like to ask you with respect to our position with respect to settlements, I don't understand the rationale of presenting settlements as the central core issue of the Israeli Palestinian dispute when in fact there are issues that equal or are great-

er in terms of what is going to be required to resolve this historic conflict.

But to the extent that we do address settlements—and I believe that they should be addressed, absolutely—why is it that we are not focused mostly on those settlements that in fact pose a significant obstacle to the ultimate creation of a contiguous Palestinian state which is prosperous, as opposed to those settlements that I believe, at least in private, all responsible parties understand ultimately do not pose that kind of an obstacle to the ultimate creation of a Palestinian state?

I understand the legalities. I understand that, in effect, under our law all settlements at this point are treated the same. But the truth is, in terms of moving forward at a very difficult process and permitting the Israeli Government an opportunity to, in fact, take significant risks for peace, if we focused on those settlements that, in fact, do pose an obstacle to a contiguous Palestinian state, isn't this a formula that might possibly allow us to get at the heart of the issue as to why the question of settlements needs to be addressed as soon as possible?

Mr. FELTMAN. Congressman Wexler, thanks for the question.

I need to state from the outset, because everything will be conditional on this, that President Obama stated our policy on settlements clearly in several different fora, including the U.N. General Assembly when he said that the United States does not accept the legitimacy of ongoing settlement activities. That is the policy.

What have we been trying to do lately? We have been trying to get the parties back to direct negotiations where they deal with the big issues and they deal with the permanent status issues. The discussions on settlements that we have been having with the Israelis are not some condition that we want to see met before we get to negotiations. We want to get to negotiations as quickly as possible.

We are asking the parties to take steps that would improve the atmosphere, that would make it more conducive that these negotiations be successful. And we have also reminded the parties in that context, in building the right atmosphere of trust and confidence you need for negotiations to succeed, that the parties have made certain obligations to each other already. The Israelis have accepted the road map that calls for a settlement freeze, including natural growth, full stop.

So it is in that context we have been talking to the Israelis about a settlement freeze, but it is not a condition for negotiations. We want to get back to negotiations quickly.

In terms of the proposal that you are suggesting, it is something that I believe would start to be—come in play as we get back to negotiations, as people start to discuss borders, and people start to talk about the territorial aspects of these negotiations. It becomes much easier to say which settlements are the ones that might be looked at a little bit differently, but our goal is to get the parties back to direct negotiations where all these issues can be discussed as quickly as possible in the best atmosphere.

Mr. WEXLER. Prime Minister Fayyad's plan, which I think is the most intelligent statement ever put forward by a Palestinian leader to push forward with 2 years of institutional building across the board, what are we doing to support those efforts, if I may ask?

Mr. FELTMAN. I agree with your statement. It is an excellent plan. Prime Minister Fayyad, who I know you know personally, is a very serious leader who sees that to have a Palestinian state it is not enough. To declare statehood, you have to have the institutions that make that state work, that are accountable, that are answerable to the Palestinian people.

And we have full confidence in the vision that he has outlined in that plan. We stand ready with the international community to help Salam Fayyad realize that plan of building those institutions the Palestinian state needs in 2 years. But we want to be led by the Palestinians themselves. This is a Palestinian effort. It is not some kind of international effort. We will be supportive to the extent that they welcome our support.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you very much.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Rohrabacher.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Ambassador, I know there have been serious mistakes that America has made in foreign policy in the past. There is no doubt about that. So my criticism of the Obama administration and my negative analysis so far is not just aimed at President Obama. There are things that should have been done in the past that weren't done.

But since the President took over, he had what appears to have been a sensitivity or a sincerity offensive in trying to prove to the people of the world that the United States, we really are sincere, good guys—and I at least interpreted it that way, in trying to be as open-minded about it as I could about it at the time. But his basically apologies for alleged misdeeds that occurred decades ago in Iran, for example, has that in any way worked to alter what we would consider the negative policies of Iran, for example, support of terrorists or perhaps moving forward on their nuclear program?

Mr. FELTMAN. Iran is still playing a destabilizing role in the region, without question. Whether we are talking about the nuclear file, whether we are talking about its support for terrorism, Iran's rejection of a two-state solution or Iran's repression of its own people, Iran is still playing a deeply negative role in the region.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. So the President reaching out to these people in an act of sincerity has actually perhaps resulted in the opposite from what he would have wanted?

Mr. FELTMAN. He—what I—Mr. Congressman, how I would respond would be to note that, by not talking to Iran for 30 years, we also were unable to modify Iran's behavior. So Iran was supporting Hezbollah, building up its nuclear capacity in a time when we in fact were refusing to deal with it.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I am exactly not talking about necessarily talking with them, but when someone apologizes for an American CIA operation back in the 1950s, 60 years ago in another century, and takes that approach on trying to win or open up dialogue, it looks like to me that that approach failed.

Mr. FELTMAN. I believe when the President has given his speeches, such as the one in Cairo, he has been essentially putting a challenge before the people of the Middle East. He has said, "We are willing to look at our history, our own stereotypes. We are willing to look beyond our own stereotypes, and we are asking you to do

the same." It is a new language that he hopes can be one of our tools in order to break through on the impasse, whether we are dealing with Iran or any number of other challenges that we have.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. For example—

Mr. FELTMAN. It is not naive or ill considered. It is allowing us to use diplomacy and engagement in a way that we might be able to make some headway with the other side.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. We will find out if it is ill conceived when we look at the results.

For example, the President—is this perception wrong that the President has stepped back from the intense human rights criticism that we were actually focusing and directing toward Iran prior to this administration? For example, during the elections and the demonstrations after the elections, because of the crooked elections there in Iran, there were many demonstrators out; and some of us who had been watching the scene noted a lack of intensity over America's, let's say, support, verbal support for people who were in the streets struggling for democracy.

Mr. FELTMAN. I think you are aware, Congressman, of the attempts by the Iranian Government to say that those demonstrations that took place after the results of the June elections were something foreign grown. They were something inspired from the outside. We all needed to be very sensitive so that those—

Mr. ROHRABACHER. That seems to be the word. This administration, they are sensitive.

Let me ask you this. They have arrested—I only have a little bit of time left—they arrested some of the leaders, some of the democratic leaders of those demonstrations against crooked elections and a mullah dictatorship. They are holding these elections as a facade for their own control. What have we done to challenge the Iranian mullah dictatorship on the lives of these leaders who have now been condemned to death? What have we said will happen as a result if they do indeed execute these people?

Mr. FELTMAN. You know there are a number of things, Congressman, that have been happening. I would draw your attention to the statements the White House and the State Department have made in response to the sentencing of an American citizen, a fellow American, Kian Tajbakhsh, an Iranian American scholar. We strongly condemned this. This was one of the roundups after the elections where this American was arrested. We have condemned this strongly and firmly.

We have addressed our concerns now directly to the Iranians on the margins of the October 1st meeting. We have made our statements clear, and we continue to look for other ways to draw attention to Iran's dismal human rights record. It is appalling treatment of its own citizens in the aftermath of the elections.

Ultimately, the Iranian Government needs to earn the respect of its own people, and that will help it gain respect internationally. But we have been absolutely clear about our support for democracy, civil society, the fact that the Iranian voices of the people need to be heard in Iran.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. It hasn't been clear to me.

Thank you very much.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Your time has expired.

Ms. Berkley.

Ms. BERKLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman; and thank you so much for joining us, Mr. Ambassador. There are a couple of issues that I would like to explore with you, if I may.

I am in favor of a two-state solution, and I am on record for many years talking about it. Of course, it has to be a viable Palestinian state with—as you stated, with functioning government institutions, a functioning economy so that the Palestinian people could get jobs to support themselves, and with no Hamas living side by side with a secured Jewish state of Israel.

When I met with Mr. Fayyad this summer, we had a most engaging and lively conversation. And I, too, agree that he has done an extraordinary job. But when I asked him whether the Palestinians were prepared to give up the right of return in order to move forward in the peace process and create a two-state solution, he refused to answer my question. He was very gracious and very charming, but he would not give me a definitive answer. And that concerned me quite a bit, because there cannot be a democratic Jewish state of Israel without the Palestinians giving a right of return.

But there are two issues that I would like to explore with you. One is the settlements; and I am glad that my dear friend who I am going to miss terribly in Congress, Mr. Wexler, brought this up. I think we made a very large strategic blunder when we publicly dressed down the Israelis regarding the settlement issue but should have and could have been said behind closed doors I think created a problem.

I don't think that the settlements are the seminal issue. There were no settlements in 1948 or 1956 or 1967, and Israel still managed to get itself attacked. It wasn't an issue then, and I don't believe it is an issue now.

Rather than bring the parties closer to sitting down and negotiating for a comprehensive peace agreement, I think it put the Israelis in a very uncomfortable and awkward position. And it gave Abu Mazen something else to keep him from sitting down at the peace table, saying that now he absolutely will not sit down unless all settlement activity ceases, and that may not happen for a while, and that is just keeping the two parties further apart.

Another issue that you brought up that I always—it is the linkage issue. And if only we could resolve this problem between the Israelis and the Palestinians that everything else would solve itself or we would be much closer to solving the problems that plague the Middle East. But I will submit to you that if Israel ceases exist tomorrow, would the plight of the Palestinians be any better than it is today? I would suggest to you that it would not be any better and their lives would not be improved by the disappearance of the state of Israel.

Would Iran end their nuclear ambitions if Israel ceased to exist? I don't think so.

Would the Sunnis and Shiites lay down their arms and stop killing each other in Iraq if Israel ceased to exist? I don't think so.

Would Taliban stop recruiting and lay down their arms throughout the Middle East and other parts of world? Again, I don't think so.

Would the Saudis move toward democratic institutions and give women equal rights in their country? Absolutely not.

So I am always concerned when I hear members of the administration or my colleagues, who I value very much, creating this linkage which I don't think truly exists. And I think it gives the Arab countries just the excuse they need to do nothing to improve the situation in their own countries, just blame it on Israel and we can buy more time to continue to do what we already do.

And, frankly, I think a show of good faith would be—and if we are going to put pressure on anybody, rather than on settlements, how about the Arab countries and this ridiculous economic boycott against the state of Israel?

And I thank you very much for being here.

Mr. FELTMAN. Representative Berkley, thank you.

I will comment on the last one first. Because I am sorry if I wasn't clear. There is no formal linkage between these issues. What I said is we would hope the progress on one could lead to mutually reinforcing progress on the other. But there is no formal linkage. I couldn't agree with you more on that.

What happens is that the Israeli Palestinian conflict becomes a pretext. It becomes an ability for Iran to muck around in the region. And so, by addressing that, we perhaps could help address the question of Iran's misbehavior in the region.

But I agree with you that these things are not formal linkages. We need to be working on all of these issues simultaneously on their own merits. We are a great power. We should be able to have diplomacy focus on Iran and the diplomacy focus on getting to an Arab-Israeli comprehensive peace in which Israel can live in peace and security in the region.

So I am sorry if I made it sound as though we are doing formal linkages, because that is not in fact what we are doing.

In terms of Hamas, I think it is worth reiterating—you have heard this from us a lot, but it is worth reiterating that Hamas can come to the table when Hamas abides by the Quartet Principles: Recognition of Israel, renunciation of violence, and adherence to the PLO's past agreements. These shouldn't be obstacles to some kind of Palestinian states. These are the foundation stones, the building blocks of what the Palestinians need to build that state. That is what we are asking before we have any sort of dealings with Hamas on our side.

Ms. BERKLEY. Thank you.

Mr. ACKERMAN. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. Carnahan.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman; and thank you, Ambassador, for being here.

I wanted to focus I guess on I think we have seen the new administration step up to the plate in an important way in terms of their reengagement around the world and especially in the region of the Middle East. We have seen I think an improved credibility. I believe we have seen an increased priority in what we are doing there.

I want to ask you, with regard to the Arab states in the region, what you see as bright spots in terms of those states stepping up to help make progress. Certainly we have seen some leadership

from Egypt in the heading talks, but I would like you to explain some of the bright spots you see in terms of Arab states stepping up to help make progress.

The other question I have is, we were in Lebanon this past spring and got a chance to see some of the refugee camps there, and I am especially curious of your opinion of what is going on in terms of addressing the issue of refugees and the other Arab states stepping up on that issue.

Mr. FELTMAN. Representative Carnahan, thank you.

We do see some—you have asked about some bright spots in terms of Arab engagement with us in response to our own engagement. I will give you some examples of bright spots, but let me tell you from the start we would like to see more bright spots.

Mr. CARNAHAN. We all would, indeed.

Mr. FELTMAN. So, just want to be clear, I am not looking at this and saying, this is great. We have these bright spots and are finished. No, we want to keep going.

You mentioned Egypt. Egypt has played a very, very important role in sending some pretty clear messages to Hamas about the need for Hamas to abide by those Quartet Principles. Egypt has taken some very important steps, particularly since the January conflict, in preventing smuggling of arms and money to Hamas via the tunnels. That is one example.

Saudi Arabia has just recently given \$200 billion to the Palestinian Authority, to the government headed by Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. This is an important step, because we need to have these Palestinian institutions functioning and healthy for the time that we get the Palestinian statehood.

We are working with a number of states in the Gulf in particular on various aspects of military and security issues; and this, of course, has to do with in large part the concern that all of us have about Iran's ambitions.

In the countries of North Africa, where we have a very robust counterterrorism with the countries of North Africa to try to interrupt the networks across the Sahel, the al-Qaeda and the Islamic Maghreb, as it is called, the terrorist networks that both wreck havoc in the Sahel area of Africa and North Africa as well as feed into the foreign fighter pipeline that goes to Iraq.

So we have seen some bright spots in terms of Arab responsiveness to the diplomacy that we are engaged with across the region. We certainly would like to see more.

Mr. CARNAHAN. And in particular about the refugee camps.

Mr. FELTMAN. Oh, I am sorry. In terms of Lebanon, since you visited there, I am sure you are aware of just how sensitive this issue is in Lebanon, that the Lebanese are divided in every which way on every issue you can imagine, but they are united on the issue regarding the Palestinian refugees.

And I would just repeat what I said in my statement, is that we understand that you are not going to have a comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli peace conflict without taking these Lebanese sensitivities into account. You are not going to have a solution on the back of Lebanon, in essence.

In terms of the broader issue of Palestinian refugees, this is one of the reasons we need to get back to the negotiating table as

quickly as possible. We are not going to be able to have an honest discussion on this issue except through the context of direct negotiation between the Israelis and the Palestinians; and the sooner we get to that, the better for all the states in the region, certainly the better for the poor Palestinian refugees.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. McMahan.

Mr. MCMAHON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for being with us today, Ambassador.

Ambassador, Turkey is not, by definition, a Middle Eastern country, but it most certainly has a profound influence on the countries in the Middle East. What are the implications of Turkey's evolving identity with regards to the Middle East and the issues that we have spoken to today?

Mr. FELTMAN. Representative, I will have to be a little bit careful, since I don't want my European Bureau colleagues to question what I am doing, testifying before Congress about a country that falls outside of my region. So I will talk about it a little bit in terms of Turkey and my region, rather than Turkey per se.

Turkey has played, for example, a very constructive role in Iraq. Turkey obviously has some security issues in terms of Kurdish terrorists who are located in northern Iraq, but in general Turkey has played a very positive role in helping to stabilize Iraq.

Turkey played a very important role in leading proximity talks between Israel and Syria that have fallen apart, unfortunately, for a number of reasons—the change of Israeli Government, the war in Gaza in December and January. But Turkey was able to use its good influence and offices to promote a kind of dialogue that took place between Israel and Syria.

The Syrian-Turkish relationship is one that is evolving. I would say evolving in what we would see as sort of a positive healthy direction. A few years ago, Turkey and Syria were hostile to each other. Now they have grown closer. To the extent that Syria can build ties with others, see its interest linked with others and not exclusively to Iran, I think that is inherently good.

We are concerned about what led to the cancellation of the multilateral exercise that was planned for Turkey, the decision by the Turks that one of the partners would not be welcome, so we are watching these sorts of elements. But, in general, the role of Turkey in our region, it is strong, it is growing and has basically been positive.

Mr. MCMAHON. And certainly, but for that event with the exercise, certainly probably has a role that could be helpful as a broker or as an ally to us toward peace. And it is in that vein that I ask my next question.

I know we have spoken a lot about Iran and the sanctions and the bill we voted on today, which we are all very pleased with as a good step from the Foreign Affairs Committee here in Congress, and what the administration's focus on that I would like to ask about in relation to our allies.

One of the measures that I was able to put in as an amendment was a reporting requirement where the administration tells us how the members of the G-20 are dealing with Iran in terms of whether or not they are providing equipment or refined petroleum. So I

guess my question is, does the Obama administration support targeted sanctions against the providers of petroleum in Tehran, which you have spoken of a little bit? But, also, are we going to work with our allies and companies within their countries such as with the Swiss, with Vitol and Trust Egora, which are providing material and product to Iran. Do we have an approach planned in that regard?

Mr. FELTMAN. You know, actually, Congressman, this is an ongoing process, and it is largely done quietly. But we have used, for example, the Iran Sanctions Act as well as the general international desire to see Iran behave like a responsible member of the international community in order to effect some business decisions.

You may remember that, for example, Ambassador Burns had testified—Bill Burns had testified expressing some concern about Norway's state oil company plans for investment in Iran. Soon thereafter, Norway said publicly that state oil would be relooking at its plans, and they have not moved forward with this. So we are using this in a variety of ways.

I haven't seen the legislation. I know it was marked up this morning. So I won't comment on the legislation that the administration, I am sure, will be looking at.

But, in general, what we have been trying to do is work multilaterally, where can we get the most people on board to have the greatest impact in Iran that we would hope would influence Iranian thinking? So multilaterally. And we have also tried to keep the focus on Iran's misbehavior, on Iran. Using the tools we have to build alliances with others and to basically send the message; and we have been somewhat successful. I believe that now is not the time for normal business operations with Iran.

Mr. MCMAHON. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you, very much.

Mr. Costa.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Ambassador, I think we all, to varying degrees, support bilateral and multilateral efforts; and I know this administration is about 10 months into that effort. Senator Mitchell has a difficult challenge, as you pointed out. He is a patient man, clearly from his experience in the Irish peace talks.

But when we look at the visit here earlier this year by King Abdullah from Jordan, when we look at the most recent visit by President Mubarak in August, when we look at some of the other efforts that are all, I would suppose, to be a part of this multilateral and bilateral effort as it relates to the Israeli Palestinian peace process, I think there is a concern, a level of frustration that we see a number of the critical peace partners in the area using this as a crutch or an excuse. I mean, the cancellation, as you noted, with Turkey, the relationship with Turkey and Syria right now with the 40 ministers that have been meeting—

I just picked up a quote earlier this month. King Abdullah expressed dismay over a perceived lack of administration focus on the Middle East peace process. In an interview with the Italian daily *la Repubblica*, King Abdullah said, "I heard people in Washington talking about Iran and again Iran and always Iran, but I keep on insisting on the Palestinian question."

Clearly, we are concerned about Iran and as you inferred to the 5+1, but where are the milestones here that are going to show that the countries in the neighborhood are focused at the same level that we are about achieving the critical steps necessary to achieve this peace that we talk about that is always illusive?

Mr. FELTMAN. You know, I am surprised to hear the quote you give. Because, given the amount of diplomacy that Senator Mitchell himself as well as the Secretary and the President have devoted to Middle East peace, it strikes me as somewhat odd that someone would say, well, this administration is not really trying on Middle East peace.

We want to see negotiations start as quickly as possible but also in the best possible atmosphere so that those negotiations succeed. It is not enough to just have Israelis and Palestinians sit together.

Mr. COSTA. I know, but sometimes that atmosphere is an excuse for doing nothing.

And I just want to ask you about the question of elections. The last administration went headlong into elections, and sometimes be careful what you wish for. The elections that are being proposed next year, are the Palestinians prepared to move in that—do we have any confidence in what the outcomes may bring?

Mr. FELTMAN. I wouldn't say that we would have confidence that these elections would be taking place. We know what President Abbas has said. We also have seen the reactions to that. All I can say is that our partner for peace has got to be Palestinians who accept Israel's right to exist, who agree to negotiations, who reject the use of violence in order to try to affect the outcome, who accept what has been agreed to already. That is the Palestinian partner for peace. I think that we will see a lot more intra-Palestinian debate before we will see any kind of Palestinian elections.

Mr. COSTA. Two other quick questions. I was saddened to see an article this summer of children in Hamas camps, summer camps reenacting the capture of Gilad Schalit. The Palestinians could talk borders and agreements and talk all the good happy talk that they want, but I think this was a deplorable incidence. And I think summer camp events that recognize or glorify this sets the peace process back many steps.

What is the administration doing about these kinds of efforts in the curriculum? It is just not with Palestine. I mean, still some of our partners in the Middle East, even though they have indicated they are trying to clean up their curriculum about references toward Jews and Christians and others, it still seems to be a problem.

Mr. FELTMAN. The example you describe is awful. I couldn't agree with you more. Every party in the area has a responsibility to help build the atmosphere for peace, to help build the atmosphere for trust and confidence, and the things you describe I agree it takes us in absolutely the wrong direction.

We have a dialogue going with a number of countries, it is quiet, about the curriculum; and we have some programs that are done to try to improve the curriculum that is being taught.

In the case of sort of Palestinian schools run by UNRWA, for example, we have funded a tolerance program that is supplemental

material. We are very aware of the issue that you raise. We agree—

Mr. COSTA. But do we put these countries on notice?

Mr. ACKERMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. COSTA. It is unacceptable?

Mr. ACKERMAN. It is the chair's intent to offer a quick second round. So if the gentleman would hold the additional question for that time or ask any other questions then.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Connolly.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you and welcome, Ambassador Feltman.

Mr. FELTMAN. Thank you.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Let me sort of start picking up a little bit on Mr. Costa's questions.

You made reference earlier to institution building for eventuality of a Palestinian state and Saudi investment with respect to that. How can there be, however, stable institutions for a Palestinian state so long as we have the kind of fracture between the leadership in Gaza and the leadership in the West Bank?

Mr. FELTMAN. You know, the Egyptians are attempting to bring about a Palestinian reconciliation, and we would all support a Palestinian reconciliation that abides by the Quartet conditions, that builds a unified Palestinian partner for peace. We are all supportive. But, in the meantime, there is a functioning Palestinian Authority on the West Bank. It is actually doing a pretty good job.

The IMF, the World Bank have given high marks to the accountability of the institutions being set up. When we get to the point that we have a unified Palestinian partner for peace, we would assume that those institutions would apply also to Gaza, but we don't want to neglect the ones on the West Bank that are actually working and recognized by the international community as being the Palestinian Authority responsible for administration of the Palestinian territories.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Would the United States welcome—pursuing the answer to my own question, your hopes notwithstanding, if in fact reconciliation cannot occur, would the United States support some kind of interim peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority on the West Bank leaving out Hamas and the Gaza?

Mr. FELTMAN. Forgive me for making a technical point here. The negotiating partner is the PLO, which is sort of above the PA. The PLO is a unified organization that is recognized by the Arabs to be the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. So when we get back to negotiations, who is actually sitting there would be representatives of the PLO and the Palestinian Authority is administering the territories on the ground.

Mr. CONNOLLY. But you take my point.

Mr. FELTMAN. We want to get back to negotiations. Implementation of any agreement we would hope would take place within a unified authority. But negotiation we believe should start as soon as possible, and we would hope those negotiations could help lead to a unified authority before we get to the point of implementation.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Are we prepared to go forward even absent a unified authority?

Mr. FELTMAN. I am—at this point, with all that is going on right now, I would prefer not to speculate at this point. We are prepared to go forward with negotiations now.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Okay.

Lebanon, we had some hopeful results in elections earlier this year, but the ability to form a government has been stymied. What is the current situation from the United States point of view in terms of Lebanon, and are we concerned about stability there as well?

Mr. FELTMAN. I think it is natural to be concerned when you have elections in June, we are now almost to November, and the government hasn't been formed. There is a Prime Minister designate. He has been nominated twice to form a government, and we hope he can do this as quickly as possible. There has been a formula decided by all parties.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Almost as long as waiting for the appointment of an USAID administrator, Mr. Feltman.

Mr. FELTMAN. That is above my pay grade.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I know. I couldn't resist.

Mr. FELTMAN. We have seen this several times in Lebanon. There was no President for a while, and there was a government that was boycotted for a while, and there was fighting on the streets. And now there is no government. There is no government again.

And when I look back and say, what is the unifying factor of all of these things? It was that Hezbollah and Michel Aoun were blocking the government, blocking the election of the President, blocking the government again, going out to the street to protest certain policies they didn't like. But, in the end, the Lebanese were able to come together and solve their own problems.

We hope they do that as quickly as possible. It is time to have a government in Lebanon. There is a formula for doing so and a constitution that lays out the process. The Lebanese need to be left to their own devices to do just that.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you.

I thank the chair.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Inglis.

Mr. INGLIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman; and, Ambassador, thank you for being here.

Recently, I sent a letter to Secretary Clinton asking about funding cuts for organizations that support democracy in Iran; and we are awaiting a response. In fairness, it was only October 6th, so I guess we will get a response at some point soon.

So I am interested in what light you might be able to shed on the United States policy toward these democracy supporting groups in Iran. And what I understand is that the Iranian Human Rights Documentation Center, Freedom House, and IRI all are on record as saying that their funding has been cut. I wonder if you could comment on that and whether you can corroborate that or whether—and, if so, what is the policy of the United States that would cause us to want to cut those democracy supporting organizations?

Mr. FELTMAN. Congressman, thanks.

Let me reiterate, our policy toward our programs in Iran hasn't changed. The fundamentals of what we are trying to do in Iran and across the region hasn't changed.

What are we trying to do? We are trying to help create space for a functioning, healthy civil society, where civil society voices become stronger and where they can be protected. We are trying to provide tools for civil society activists to get information to connect with each other. We are doing these things across the region. We are doing these things in a lot of different places. This has not changed from one administration to the other, from this week to the last because of elections. We are continuing to work in these areas.

In terms of individual grants of organizations that are working in Iran, all I can say is this is pretty competitive. We have resources from Congress. We put out solicitations. We do the evaluation. We do constant evaluation of a program's effectiveness.

There is no drop in funding. Quite the contrary. The individual cases you mentioned, we will look at your letter. I am not aware of the cases, but what I can say is the broad policy objectives, the broad thrust of what we are doing has not changed. We are continuing to work to strengthen civil society across the region, including in Iran, using a wide variety of partners who tend to compete with each other.

Mr. INGLIS. So I want to track with you on that, because that certainly makes a lot of sense. But, on the other hand, we have these reports of what seems to be three significant organizations being cut, again, Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, Freedom House, and IRI. As I understand, a fairly significant operation is being cut. You don't have any specific information on those three or—

Mr. FELTMAN. You know, we tend not to discuss—we tend to look at grant information as proprietary information for a number of reasons. If we have information, we will share it with partners, but we don't share it publicly.

The other thing is that there is a particular sensitivity on the funding of organizations that are doing work in Iran for reasons that you can probably all understand. And I understand there is, in fact, a staff briefing next week where staff from my bureau and others will be coming up to talk to some of your staff in more specifics about the programs that we have. And so I will make sure that they have any details they can share when they come for the staff hearing.

Mr. INGLIS. I guess the overall concern—I will run out of time here shortly—is that in our attempt to engage Iran, which seems to me to make sense, to try to talk with them in some way, I sure hope, though, that we are not giving concessions and removing ourselves from support of the projects and programs that would spread concepts of democracy in constitutional republics in Iran, people wanting to emulate the success of the United States and other countries that love freedom. And to have us back away from those in order to get some kind of engagement seems to me makes no sense, because appeasement has never worked before, and it seems to me to fly into that danger zone of appeasement which is not wise policy.

Mr. FELTMAN. Congressman, we are not backing away. We are going full steam ahead with our programs with Iran and across the region, again in order to create that space for civil society to actually play the proper role that we would all understand and building more accountable democratic governing institutions.

Mr. INGLIS. Thank you very much.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Sherman.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you. I just came by to ask simple questions about small amounts of money that are appropriated.

I believe we provided recently \$2.5 million for democracy in Syria; and we will be providing money for democracy in Syria in the future, I would suspect. Can we be confident that if we provide money to the State Department to promote democracy in Syria that none of that money will be handed by the State Department to President Assad or to his government or to his family?

Mr. FELTMAN. Congressman Sherman, I am very aware of the reference that you are making there; and I assure you we will be transparent with the Congress. We will make sure that we have done our due diligence about who the end recipients are so we are actually helping civil society and not a family.

Mr. SHERMAN. Let me at it this way. Assuming you do your due diligence—and mistakes can happen, but will you use due diligence just to do the due diligence or will you use due diligence to make sure that you are doing your best job to make sure that none of the money goes to President Assad or to his government or to his family? Or are you going to do due diligence—

Mr. FELTMAN. I will say yes, because we want to support civil society in its role. So I will answer your question yes.

Mr. SHERMAN. So you will not be building the President Assad Health Clinic in Aleppo—

Mr. FELTMAN. No.

Mr. SHERMAN [continuing]. Under the control of the Syrian Health Ministry?

Of course, then referencing the congressional notification of September 15th dealing with the \$2.5 million we provided to promote democracy in Libya, I have been told at less formal settings that this document is going to be superseded and that no money is going to be spent until we get a new document.

Mr. FELTMAN. You are correct, and we will use the same criteria you just outlined for Syria when we submit that new document to you on Libya.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you.

The one thing I will point out about the Libyan document is that in many cases it is unclear who gets the money. They subdivide it, a half million here, a quarter million there. And sometimes they specifically identify who gets the money, and sometimes they don't.

So I will ask you not only to achieve the aims you stated but to achieve a specificity in the congressional notification so that we know who gets the money, not just what purposes the money will try to serve.

Mr. FELTMAN. I give you those assurances, Congressman Sherman. We understand the sensitivity.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you very much. I yield back.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Sherman.

Mr. Ambassador, the Obama administration has rightfully denounced the Goldstone Report which I want to talk about for a minute, which, if taken seriously, would make it legally impossible for our country or any other country to defend themselves from terrorists who hide between and among civilians.

I would suspect that when a country responds to terrorist attacks and terrorists, as we know them of recent vintage, have found it to their advantage to hide that way among civilian populations. And I would suspect that there were probably some given days in our response to the terrorist attack against our country that we responded in Afghanistan, maybe today in Pakistan, maybe previously in Iraq, in trying to kill bad guys who hung out among innocent people, that there were probably some of those days where in 1 day we killed as many people as who died in the Israeli incursion in Gaza.

Which, if we were susceptible to any General Assembly resolution that might be passed based on Goldstone, other countries might take it into their account to declare the United States and the officers thereof as international war criminals, cite international jurisdiction, and prosecute American former soldiers who are now tourists, or the Vice President, or you, whoever might venture into their country, and put you on trial for being an international war criminal.

This would prevent us and any other country from defending themselves. Prime Minister Netanyahu has been forcefully arguing that the international community can't possibly expect Israel to exchange land for peace, if, when peace breaks down, Israel effectively is prohibited from defending itself.

Firstly, I think the Prime Minister is completely right; and, second, there is not even a shred of possibility that the Israeli public would agree to any peace agreement under the absurd operational restrictions that the Goldstone Report proposes to require of Israel and any other countries' armed forces.

What is the administration doing both to protect our rights to self-defense and to make it clear to the international community that they can have the Goldstone view, or they can have peace in the Middle East, but they can't have Goldstone and Middle East peace?

Mr. FELTMAN. Mr. Chairman, you gave a very compelling description of the problem that the Goldstone Report poses for us in terms of our own role and in terms of Middle East peace.

You know, we were opposed to the mandate of the Goldstone Report; and, as you outlined, its conclusions are sweeping. I can tell you there is no—we see no role for the Security Council. We see no role for Goldstone in the Security Council. We will use our voice, our vote, and all organizations where the Goldstone Report might appear in order to make it clear what the stakes are here and why we have a problem with the sweeping conclusion that the Goldstone Report poses.

You know, you mentioned our own reaction to 9/11 and perhaps there were mistakes made now and again. We have internal processes to look at those mistakes. Israel does, too. It is a democratic state. And this is the point we are making to everybody, that Israel

has processes that they have and are using to investigate any claims of abuses, any claims of—any incidents cited by people as being beyond the law of war. So we are working to make sure that, to the extent we have this, the Goldstone Report doesn't become sort of enshrined internationally, that people understand the implications of this broadly.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Why would we be more successful down the road when we weren't successful in dissuading the vote from coming up in Geneva and being sent to the General Assembly? Why would—is there a process where we are counting votes in the General Assembly right now to see if we can kill this thing? Because I don't know that the mass goes to our advantage here.

Mr. FELTMAN. I don't know. I would agree with you. I would be skeptical about our ability to influence a General Assembly vote. I am much more confident of our ability to have influence in the Security Council, for all the reasons you know; and the Security Council, frankly, on matters of international law figures much more prominently than the General Assembly does.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I have more confidence that you are right here than not as far as our influence in the Security Council, looking at the lineup, but not completely sure. But, nonetheless, if it passes in the General Assembly, that would be sufficient enough in some countries to cite the General Assembly passage of a resolution as an enabling matter for them to invoke whatever they would want to invoke against us or any other country. Do you think that there is a mathematical chance of stopping it in the General Assembly?

Mr. FELTMAN. I—

Mr. ACKERMAN. Your answer—I am rephrasing—to the Security Council would be, possibly we can, more likely than—but not in the General Assembly. What is going to happen is my concern.

Mr. FELTMAN. Unfortunately—

Mr. ACKERMAN. In the neighboring countries.

Mr. FELTMAN. Unfortunately, I think our influence is limited in the General Assembly. And it is a problem in many of these U.N. bodies that you end up with this inherently anti-Israeli bias that comes out in a variety of ways. This is one that could have broader implications, unfortunately. I do know that in Geneva the resolution passed the Human Rights Council, but it passed by 25 votes out of 47 members. This is the lowest margin of any of these anti-Israeli measures that the U.N. Human Rights Council deals with.

Mr. ACKERMAN. If the Yankees win the World Series four games to three, they are still winners.

Mr. FELTMAN. But it may be an indication that with U.S. leadership and U.S. partnership with others we can start to steer these U.N. organizations away from the number of anti-Israeli resolutions that almost come up in a pro forma basis. And that has got to be our ultimate goal as well, do what we can to prevent the enshrining of the Goldstone recommendations and do what we can to steer the U.N. bodies away from inherently anti-Israeli bias that comes up so often.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Last question, is that your shop that is doing that or Senator Mitchell's shop?

Mr. FELTMAN. It is a joint effort. Because we have Ambassador Rice at US-UN, Cabinet official. She was just in Israel and had

meetings with the Israelis on October 21st where this was discussed. We have the international organizations. We have the State Department, the legal office. We have a lot of people who are working on these issues.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Rohrabacher.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Just a note on the United Nations. There are some of us here in Congress that are skeptical of the United Nations. Period. You have an organization set up where it is made—

Mr. ACKERMAN. That means your attitude has gotten more sympathetic.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Yes. It is an organization who is made up of governments, half of which are so authoritarian and corrupt that we would think are totally contrary to what the United States is all about, at least half of them. I don't see really any future in basing our national security or anybody else's security or prosperity on that organization.

I would like to ask you a little bit about our Government policy. You basically told us today that there has not been a retreat, even though there is a perceived retreat, from a tough stance on human rights. And when given the examples of the Human Rights Documentation Center being defunded, the Farsi-English online journal for democracy and human rights being defunded, efforts by the International Republican Institute, areas that are focusing on human rights activities in Iran being defunded, that those are aberrations and not reflective of a broad policy. The broad policy has stayed the same. These things are just all little things that don't really reflect the overall commitment to human rights.

Mr. FELTMAN. Yes, I do say that. I sense your skepticism, Congressman Rohrabacher, but I do say that.

There is a highly competitive process, as the American taxpayers would expect, in order for any organization to receive U.S. Government funding. I am not aware of these individuals' cases but, as I said, there will be a staff briefing next week. I will make sure our staff is aware of the individual cases and can share what they can share, given proprietary concerns and all of that.

What I said—I will say it again—is, we are continuing full steam ahead with our programs to promote civil society, promote the protection of human rights, to promote democracy, accountable and responsible governments and the rule of law across the region, including in Iran.

We have received funding from Congress for these programs. We have asked for funding for these programs. We want these programs to continue.

Perhaps the language sounds a little bit different to you now than a year ago; I don't know. But the commitment to work for accountability, for rule of law, for protection of human rights, for protection of minorities, this is all the same. And if you go back and you look at President Obama's speech on July 4 in Cairo, these themes were indeed there.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay. Let me—I have only got a couple of minutes because there is a difference in words and there is a difference in what is perceived as attitudes; and sometimes what we perceive as sensitive and honest and reaching out is perceived in

other cultures as weakness and a lack of resolve. And I would suggest if that is perceived in the Middle East, then we will have the opposite results from what you were hoping for.

Let me get another specific. Camp Ashraf in Iraq is—of course, there is an encampment of people who are opposing the Iranian dictatorship and actually involved in basically efforts to fight the mullahs, and to fight the mullah dictatorship. They now are being threatened with being returned. Some people are actually talking about returning them to Iran, which would probably result in a mass execution.

What is our position on that? And are we solidly suggesting, or solidly and not just suggesting, but do we have some penalty for the Iraqi Government if they throw these people in Camp Ashraf over to the mullah dictatorship?

Mr. FELTMAN. We are watching the situation with Camp Ashraf very, very closely. And unfortunately, there has been a recent example of where violence could have been avoided by both the MEK and the Iraqis, and in fact, it wasn't when the Iraqis, you know, went in in a very provocative action to set up a police station and the MEK responded with violence.

We have seen an example, fortunately contained, of what could happen. So we are watching this extremely closely.

I think you are aware that with the turnover of Camp Ashraf to Iraqi sovereignty at the beginning of the year, we got assurances from the Iraqis that they would not forcibly return, forcibly expel the MEK Camp Ashraf residents, MEK members, to countries in which they had a reasonable expectation of persecution. So we have written assurances.

Now, in addition, though, we are watching, and we have asked the U.N. Assistance Mission in Iraq to also play a role here; and the U.N. Assistance Mission in Iraq—

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Have we suggested to the Iraqis that there would be a consequence, a negative consequence, that we would then act in a way and do something today that would be harmful to them if, indeed, they moved on Camp Ashraf and threw these people over into the mullah dictatorship next door?

Mr. FELTMAN. Believe me, the Iraqis know how concerned we are with this. And we have also sent messages to the MEK.

We are actually more concerned about an Iraqi desire to move Camp Ashraf to someplace else inside Iraq. The expectation is not that they are going to expel the MEK, Camp Ashraf residents, but that they would try to move them, forcibly move them, to a different location in Iraq, and that too could lead to bloodshed.

And so, believe me, Congressman, we are on top of this all the time.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay. One last note on this, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for indulging me.

I would think that moving that camp is certainly not on a par with sending them back to Iran. They need, the Kurds, who have a negative history with this group, may be open to accepting them and that might be a useful compromise if the Kurds show some leadership in this.

So thank you very much and I appreciate that, Mr. Chairman.  
Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you. Mr. Klein.

Mr. KLEIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador, it is nice to see you. Thank you for your service. We appreciate it.

I would like to focus on sanctions. And as you know, we took up a bill today in Foreign Affairs, and I think there is a general recognition that we in the United States need to send strong signals. There are certain things that we can do that are symbolic and certain things, including maybe today's sanctions and others, that can have more of a broad effect.

But ultimately the sanctions will be most effective if we have our allies and our interested parties around the world collaborating with us to do this. And we have been in constant contact with the European Union; and it always comes back to Russia and China, in addition to the Union, but China's influence is quite substantial. They sort of operate in a different sphere in many ways.

There are oil interests, and there have been some efforts to substitute oil or some efforts from reaching out to some of our friends in the oil-producing countries to replace United Arab Emirates and, I think, others. Can you share with us some of those, or what you can talk about, can you share with us the attempts to try to bring China more effectively into this process?

Mr. FELTMAN. Congressman, thanks for the question. You certainly have zeroed in on a very important aspect of the Iran policy.

We have had a lot of quiet discussions with the Arab states about their concerns with Iran because their concerns with Iran largely overlap with ours, but they are also somewhat different because they live in the neighborhood. And they have very strong concerns about Iran.

We have talked to them about the need to implement the Security Council resolutions. We have got progress there in terms of the sanctions on Iran that are mentioned in three Chapter 7 Security Council resolutions. But we have also had the conversations with them that, hey, you guys are concerned about Iran; you have relations with China and you have certain assets that you can bring to a discussion with China about that.

So we have encouraged the sort of discussion that you have talked about, and I think you have seen publicly some reference to results on this. In general, China has played a constructive role with us. China has assured us that they are with us on the P5+1 approach to Iran.

So we are looking at the question of working internationally in a variety of ways; one is the P5+1, one is working to find other multilateral alliances, like-minded states that will join with us on sanctions that may go beyond what is less specifically in the U.N.

You may have seen last week, for example, that the United Kingdom has designated the Islamic Republic of Iran shipping lines, IRISL, which follows the designation we did a while ago, which again adds a multilateral aspect to sanctions that we think is useful.

Mr. KLEIN. Thank you for those comments.

I mean, I will share with you—and it is no big revelation here—that all of us as members of this committee, we receive the ambassadors and representatives of the Arab states regularly, and they

all mention in their talking points about Ahmadinejad and the threat that Iran poses to the neighborhood.

And, in fact, you know, I give full credit to the first President Bush, who was able to engage in a much broader way the other Arab states, in part because the invasion of Kuwait was a direct threat to the neighbors. Again, we need to be building on that.

And the second question, which you have already gotten into a little bit, was what else can our Arab allies do to help facilitate changes here in behavior? And part of that is the oil. Are there other issues out there besides oil that China is interested in, that it deals with with Iran?

Mr. FELTMAN. Well, the other aspect that we talk to the Arabs a lot about are—I mentioned it briefly—are the financial sanctions, are the sanctions that are mentioned in three Security Council resolutions.

Countries like the UAE—UAE have been implementing the regulations needed to put these sanctions into effect. So that is another aspect of that is to make sure that all of our allies are complying with the Security Council resolutions, in a way that Iran looks out of its borders and says, hey, wait a minute, these sanctions are starting to hurt and they are starting to be universally applied. That is one aspect of it.

Another aspect, frankly, are security and military cooperation. We have a very strong security-military cooperation going with each of the Gulf States. I would suspect at some point, Iran is looking across the Gulf and saying, hey, wait a minute. When did that happen? When did all these states across the water from us get this kind of sophisticated armed forces?

We are working in a lot of different ways to try to get Iran's attention and persuade Iran that it is time to alter its behavior and become a responsible member of the international community, rather than a rogue member of the international community.

Mr. KLEIN. Mr. Chairman, if I can just follow up, one last question if you would indulge me?

Part of that whole sanctions process is to—when we pass sanctions, to enforce them. The Iran Sanctions Act that was passed a number of years ago, through the last couple of administrations, I think that a lot of people feel like we have not enforced enough of really what has been identified. And I did a letter recently with about 50 Members, which went out to encourage the administration to identify and facilitate the enforcement. And the basis of that was from the Congressional Research Service report that we got a copy of from October 8, 2009, which identified a number of businesses that are in violation of the Iran Sanctions Act.

So my purpose in bringing that up in this hearing today is to, if we are going to be serious about this, and have both a diplomatic effort, which I fully endorse and support, as well as the carrot and the stick, the stick has to be viewed as not just symbolic, not just a piece of paper, but ready—and we are willing and taking action to enforce its terms.

Mr. FELTMAN. If I may, Mr. Chairman, respond?

Our approach on sanctions in general has been, let's work multilaterally. Let's keep the spotlight on what Iran is doing. Let's not

have fights among the allies. Let's bring the allies together in order to bring the pressure to bear on Iran.

But we have heard your message loud and clear about the Iran Sanctions Act. We have the message of this committee loud and clear about the Iran Sanctions Act. We have the letter that you and many others of this committee have signed.

And I will tell you that we have started a process of looking into the 20 companies, the 20 deals that you list in this letter, and we expect to have this preliminary review finished in about 45 days, in which case we would be able to say which of these need a further investigation as to whether they violate the Iran Sanctions Act.

And we look forward to working with this committee, keeping Congress informed as we go forward in this review process of the deals listed in your letter.

I will comment that, in some cases, Iran announces all sorts of deals that—they do it for political purposes that, in fact, don't amount to anything. And there are a couple, like with Total in particular that Iran has trumpeted, that we have looked into; and in fact, nothing is there. So we have got to start a review process of the 20 companies that are on that list.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Well, Mr. Ambassador, it appears that my list is exhausted. You have outlasted and endured us. We thank you very much for your participation, your excellent testimony and the frank discussion we have had and your answering all of our questions. Hope to see you soon.

Mr. FELTMAN. Thank you for inviting me, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. The subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:55 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

# A P P E N D I X



MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

**SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE**  
**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
*U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*  
*WASHINGTON, D.C.*

**Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia**  
**Gary L. Ackerman (D-NY), Chairman**

October 21, 2009

**TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, to be held in **Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building**:

**DATE:** Wednesday, October 28, 2009

**TIME:** 1:00 p.m.

**SUBJECT:** A Regional Overview of the Middle East

**WITNESS:** The Honorable Jeffrey D. Feltman  
Assistant Secretary  
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs  
U.S. Department of State

**By Direction of the Chairman**

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

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**The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly (VA-11)**

**MESA Subcommittee Hearing: An Overview of the Middle East  
Wednesday, October 28, 2009  
1pm  
GERALD E. CONNOLLY (VA-11)**

The two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have dominated recent discussions about the Near East, but there are other issues that deserve full attention.

One of these is Iran. Earlier this week, this subcommittee, along with two other subcommittees, held a hearing on Iran's growing presence in the Western Hemisphere. Among the topics of concern were Hezbollah's presence in the Tri-Border Area (TBA)—of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay—and Iran's growing ties with Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia and Nicaragua. Yesterday, the Full Committee reported out the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act. Given the House Foreign Affairs Committee's recent actions on Iran, how efficacious are the Committee's actions?

Another major issue is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The most recent development is the U.N. Human Rights Council's endorsement of the Goldstone Report. Members of Congress have shown their disapproval with the introduction of House Resolution 867, which "call[s] on the President and the Secretary of State to oppose unequivocally any endorsement or further consideration" of this report. The road to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is difficult, and assigning blame without proposing solutions is counterproductive. An increase in tension will not help resolve this long-lasting conflict. What are the prospects for moving forward in Israeli-Palestinian peace?

**The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly (VA-11)**

The U.S.-Egypt relationship is important for the national security of both countries. Egypt has been a stabilizing partner in the quest for Middle East Peace. Elections in Egypt will take place in 2011, and the general consensus in foreign policy circles is that President Mubarak's son, Gamal Mubarak, will win. What are the prospects for a successful election and peaceful transition? And what will be the fate of President Mubarak's National Democratic Party (NDP)?

Lastly, how is the progress in Lebanon with regard to rebuilding its democratic institutions? Though Lebanon had relatively successful parliamentary elections in June, there are problems with cabinet formation efforts.

I look forward to Assistant Secretary Feltman's update on the Middle East.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Feltman by  
Ranking Member Dan Burton (#1)  
Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia  
“Overview of the Middle East”  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

Ambassador Feltman, doesn't the Iranian regime's long record of cat-&-mouse make a mockery of any attempt at good-faith negotiations with it? Is it safe to put US national security interests on hold while we wait for Iran to get serious?

**Answer:**

The aim of direct diplomacy is to advance our interests, not to make friends or appease enemies. For decades, refusing to talk to Iran has done nothing to help us achieve our objectives vis-à-vis Iran. Iran continued to expand its nuclear program, support terrorism, and violate the rights of its citizens.

President Obama came into office willing to test whether dialogue would yield more positive results, with full awareness that dialogue may prove ineffective. This is exactly why we are employing a range of tools for dealing with Iran and continue to stress to Iran and others that we are pursuing principled dialogue to achieve results.

We – in coordination with our partners – will be taking stock of where things stand at the end of the year, as actions are taken or not taken by Iran to

constructively address international concerns. At that time, we will make appropriate judgments about next steps, including the option of imposing additional pressure as outlined in our dual-track strategy and further isolating Iran from the international community. As we have said, open-ended dialogue is not an option. As we move forward, we will consult with our Hill colleagues every step of the way.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#2)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

Ambassador Feltman, I'm gravely concerned about the deteriorating security situation in Iraq. After two years of relative calm, the last 2 months has brought two horrific bombings, including one earlier this week that targeted government ministries & killed more than 150. Can you assure this subcommittee that this administration is doing everything in its power to hold the victory that has been achieved there with significant US blood & treasure over the last six years?

**Answer:**

The recent attacks were horrific and underline that although they are weakened, violent extremists, in particular al-Qaeda in Iraq, retain the capacity to murder dozens of innocent Iraqi civilians. While no one would wish to minimize the severity of these attacks and the loss felt by the families of the victims, we must still bear in mind that overall violence in Iraq has fallen sharply in the past 18 months. This represents demonstrable progress and, in close collaboration with the Iraqi Security Forces, we are doing everything in our power to safeguard it.

Without going into operational details, the Government of Iraq, with advice and support from both Embassy and U.S. Military personnel in Iraq, has taken steps to address conditions that permitted the attacks of August 19 and October 25. Also, again without minimizing the horror of the two attacks perpetrated against

institutions of the Government of Iraq, violent extremists have failed in efforts to spark sectarian violence or to threaten the overall stability of the nation of Iraq. The people and political leaders of Iraq have shown that they are committed to working together across sectarian and communal lines to build a modern, productive nation for its entire people and to combat violent extremists.

Through regular engagement with senior political leaders and in training efforts with the Iraqi military and police, U.S. personnel, civilian and military, are working to ensure that the sacrifices made in Iraq by Americans, as well as Iraqis and many others, lead to a stable, secure, and self-reliant Iraq. I note that in close consultation across the entire U.S. government, including our Embassy and our armed forces, we are doing all we can to ensure that the Government of Iraq and its people have the tools they need to direct their own destiny and become an active member of the international community. We are all proud of the efforts our civilian and military personnel have made in and for Iraq – we will continue our efforts to ensure success.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#3)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

National Security Adviser Jim Jones said that if he could solve only one problem in the world, it would be the Arab-Israeli conflict. Doesn't this overlook the Iranian menace and the malign forces of jihad that we see destroying peace in Lebanon, Israel, attacking our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan?

**Answer:**

Making peace between Israelis and Palestinians—and between Israel and its Arab neighbors—strengthens the U.S. hand in addressing violent extremism and countering other regional threats, including from Iran. It serves U.S. national security interests and strengthens Israeli and regional security and stability. Resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict will not automatically end the Iranian nuclear program, just as neutralizing Iranian ambitions will not resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But efforts on both fronts are mutually-reinforcing.

The administration has placed a high priority on approaching Iran based on principled engagement. Iran's nuclear program and status as one of the most active state sponsors of terrorism remain top concerns, and this administration has made resolving these challenges a top priority. We believe that diplomacy offers the best opportunity to address these issues. In coordination with our allies and

friends, we are pursuing a dual-track strategy of incentives and pressures within a framework of direct, principled engagement. Our goal is for Iran to change course and become a constructive member of the international community, a course which would benefit the Iranian people and enhance peace and stability not only in the Middle East, but throughout the world.

While we remain committed to reaching a diplomatic solution through meaningful engagement with Iran, we know that pressure plays a role in persuading Iran to realize the costs of its destabilizing activities. Therefore, we are advancing a strategy of international action to pressure Iran to change its policies. By utilizing the leverage of both engagement and pressure through the P5+1 dual-track policy, we seek to persuade the Iranian government that its current approach is not in its best interest.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#4)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

Wouldn't that be a better "silver bullet" for the National Security Adviser to have identified?

**Answer:**

President Obama and Secretary Clinton are personally and deeply committed to launching successful negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians at the first possible moment. The U.S. is continuing its engagement with all stakeholders in this effort, and Special Envoy Mitchell is in intense discussions with the Israelis and Palestinians in order to establish a framework for discussions. Our goal is to achieve a two-state solution that represents the aspirations of the Palestinian people for sovereignty and control over their own future while guaranteeing Israel's future security.

Making peace between Israelis and Palestinians – and between Israel and its Arab neighbors – serves U.S. national security interests by strengthening U.S. efforts to respond to other foreign policy imperatives in the region.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#5)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

Iran's delay in responding positively and firmly to the LEU agreement raises serious questions in my mind about Iran's intentions. Will Iran carry out this agreement as negotiated? If so, when will the LEU be transferred out of the country? And how long will it take Iran to replace this LEU with a sufficient quantity to produce a nuclear weapon if further processed to weapons grade?

**Answer:**

The October meetings in Geneva and Vienna marked a constructive beginning. There is, however, a long road ahead and we will need to see real progress from Iran in the coming weeks and months.

The P5+1 has made clear that Tehran must agree to another P5+1 political-director level meeting focused on the nuclear issue. We have stressed the need for continued cooperation regarding the Qom enrichment facility, including access to personnel and documents. And we have called upon Iran to implement the IAEA's Tehran Research Reactor (TRR) proposal that Iran agreed to in Geneva on October 1.

We believe Iran's acceptance and implementation of the TRR proposal is a key early opportunity for Iran to take a concrete, tangible step that will help begin to create some confidence in Iran's peaceful nuclear intentions. We are still awaiting Iran's formal reply to the offer.

If fully implemented, the project will: assist in decreasing regional tensions arising from Iran's growing stockpile of LEU; reduce the risk of near-term breakout; and create more space to create additional opportunities to address international doubts about the intent of Iran's program, while responding to a real humanitarian and medical need of the people of Iran. It would also demonstrate to Iran that the international community can be trusted to deliver on the proposals it offers Iran. As envisioned by the proposal, the majority of Iran's LEU would be transferred out of the country within a few weeks of its implementation. Given its current enrichment facilities, it would take Iran approximately one year to replace this LEU with a sufficient quantity to produce a nuclear weapon if further processed to weapons grade.

We – in coordination with our partners – will be taking stock of where things stand as the talks progress, as actions are taken or not taken, and we will make appropriate judgments about the next steps, including the option of imposing additional pressure. While Iran has informally flagged some concerns about the terms it agreed to, it has not yet formally responded to the IAEA offer.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#6)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

How confident is the administration that Iran is not merely stalling for time?

**Answer:**

We are concerned Iran continues to expand its capability to enrich uranium. The same technology that produces fuel for reactors can be used to produce material for weapons. We remain concerned about the possibility of a covert program, given both the recent revelations about the Qom enrichment facility and Iran's overall begrudging cooperation with the IAEA.

As Secretary Clinton said in her recent address at the United States Institute of Peace, the Administration's blueprint for our efforts in working to revitalize the nonproliferation regime is based on the hard, day-to-day work of active diplomacy – confronting proliferators, strengthening the capabilities of the IAEA, and ensuring that all nations abide by their obligations under the NPT. The aim of direct diplomacy is to advance interests, not to make friends or appease enemies.

Refusing to talk to Iran has not moved us closer to achieving our objectives. Iran continued to expand its nuclear program, support terrorism, and violate the

rights of its citizens. President Obama came into office willing to test whether dialogue would yield more positive results with Iran, with full awareness that dialogue might also prove ineffective. This is exactly why we are employing a range of tools for dealing with Iran and continue to stress to Iran and others that we are pursuing principled dialogue to achieve real results.

We – in coordination with our partners – will be taking stock of where things stand as the talks progress, as actions are taken or not taken, and we will make appropriate judgments about the next steps, including the option of imposing additional pressure.

We have conveyed to Iran that, if it expects the world to have confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear program, then Iran must engage fully and immediately with the IAEA to address all outstanding issues surrounding its nuclear program. As set forth in numerous resolutions of the IAEA and the UN Security Council, Iran must fully implement its IAEA Safeguards Agreement and bring into force its Additional Protocol. While this is not an open-ended process and we know time is of the essence, the fruits of direct diplomacy will take time and as the President said, October 1 was a constructive beginning.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#7)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

Iran's leaders continue to defy the UN Security Council and assert they will continue uranium enrichment. Has any progress been made towards Iran agreeing to verifiably suspend its enrichment program? Will we continue to insist that Iran comply with UNSC resolutions?

**Answer:**

The Administration's goal remains unchanged: We continue to seek that Iran verifiably suspend its nuclear enrichment activities. This goal is inscribed in five UN Security Council resolutions and is at the center of the proposal that the P5+1 have put on the table. The United States will continue to work towards achieving not only this goal, but also Iran's full compliance with all its international obligations pursuant to UN Security Council resolutions, its safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The steps taken by the P5+1 in Geneva on October 1 were aimed at building confidence between Iran and the international community so that further discussions could result in Iran's verifiable suspension of enrichment. The

meeting was a constructive start, but we are still waiting to see if Iran will follow through on the commitments it made at that meeting.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#8)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

The President has indicated that we would take a good, hard look at additional sanctions toward the end of 2009. The Secretary of State has spoken of “crippling sanctions.” What is the current administration thinking about a timeframe for additional tough action?

**Answer:**

Right now, our objective is to see tangible progress from the current diplomatic efforts in the context of the P5+1. We are entering an intensive diplomatic phase, but this phase will not be open-ended, and is geared toward producing results.

As we have said consistently, the P5+1 have adopted a dual-track approach in which there are and must be consequences if Iran is not willing to fulfill its international nuclear obligations.

Now that we are engaging Iran, the P5+1 is in the process of considering next steps consistent with our dual-track policy. No one should underestimate our intention to follow either/both of the tracks, carefully calibrated according to Iran’s actions or lack thereof.

Pressure remains an important tool, alongside engagement, to help Iran appreciate the choice before it and encourage it to take steps to secure a better future for itself within the international community. We already have a very thorough unilateral sanctions regime and an increasingly tough measures from the EU and others, but we hope to be able to expand the multilateral regime if need be. A multilateral regime is naturally more effective – if enforced.

We – in coordination with our partners – will be taking stock of where things stand as the talks progress, as actions are taken or not taken, and we will make appropriate judgments about the next steps, including the option of imposing additional pressure.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#9)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

The IAEA just began its inspection of the Qom facility. What is the status of the inspections? Do we have any insight into what was discovered?

**Answer:**

We are still waiting on the IAEA's report of its inspection and will keep Congress updated of the results once they are announced. As we have said before, Iran has an obligation to fully cooperate with the IAEA, not simply on this inspection but on all aspects of the unresolved questions and concerns about Iran's nuclear program.

As for what we know of the Qom facilities, the site is intended to hold approximately 3,000 centrifuges. The U.S. Intelligence Community assesses an enrichment plant containing 3,000 centrifuges is not adequate to produce regular fuel reloads for civilian nuclear power plants, which require a much larger number of centrifuges.

Iran has now admitted to the existence of this facility, but denies that it was being purposefully hidden. Instead, Iran insists that the facility is dedicated to

peaceful purposes and that it had no obligation to declare the site to the IAEA prior to 180 days before the introduction of nuclear material. We do not accept this argument. Iran had undertaken an obligation to report to the IAEA when a decision to begin construction of a new nuclear facility was made.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#10)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

Are you confident in the IAEA's ability to effectively inspect and monitor this and other Iranian facilities?

**Answer:**

The United States fully supports the IAEA's efforts to address its serious concerns with Iran's nuclear program. To be successful, the IAEA needs Iran's cooperation, which is the essential element that determines the IAEA's effectiveness.

We have conveyed to Iran that, if it expects the world to have confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear program, then it must engage fully and immediately with the IAEA to address all outstanding issues surrounding its nuclear program. Iran must fully implement its IAEA Safeguards Agreement and bring into force its Additional Protocol.

We support the IAEA in its task of ensuring that Iran lives up to its obligation to provide full and unfettered access to the newly revealed Qom enrichment facility, as well as to people and documents connected to that facility.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#11)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

Last week at the U.S. Institute of Peace, Secretary Clinton highlighted the deficiencies in the IAEA's authority to carry out inspections. Given Iran's track record, are we exploring the imposition of a more stringent inspection regime on Iran, including unannounced snap inspections as was the case in Iraq?

**Answer:**

As Secretary Clinton said, we believe that "The International Atomic Energy Agency doesn't have the tools or authority to carry out its mission effectively."

We are working to correct this situation, including through seeking an increase in the IAEA's regular budget.

We have full confidence in the IAEA's ability to do its job in Iran, provided that Iran provides it the cooperation and transparency necessary. We reinforced the IAEA's authorities with respect to inspections in Iran in UNSCR 1737 (in which Iran is required to provide the IAEA the access and cooperation needed to address outstanding issues). What is now needed is Iran's active facilitation of the IAEA's work, including by answering all of the questions that still remain surrounding its past effort to develop a nuclear warhead.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#12)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

How confident is the U.S. that there are no other secret Iranian nuclear installations or secret stockpiles of enriched uranium? Given the suspicion of other Iranian covert sites, is it even possible to verify suspension?

**Answer:**

Iran's ongoing disregard for its obligations under UNSC resolutions, the NPT, and its IAEA safeguards obligations has decimated international trust in Iran's intentions with respect to its nuclear program. The revelation of the Qom enrichment facility has deepened this distrust. Absent Iran's full cooperation with the IAEA (including the implementation of the Additional Protocol and modified Code 3.1 of the Subsidiary Arrangements to its Safeguards Agreement), it will be very difficult for Iran to make any progress in addressing this confidence deficit.

Should Iran decide to suspend its proliferation-sensitive nuclear activities, as required by the UNSC, Iran could begin to change this perception. We are confident that the IAEA could verify suspension, with Iranian cooperation and transparency.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#13)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

How are we working with our European, Asian, and Mideast counterparts to implement current sanctions and prepare for sanctions if the President deems them necessary?

**Answer:**

The international community is more unified than in the past on the necessity for Iran to fully and verifiably suspend its proliferation-sensitive nuclear activities and reestablish international confidence in the peaceful nature of its nuclear program.

Three years ago, the United States was virtually alone in imposing economic pressures on Iran. Now, a growing coalition of the international community shares our concerns about Iran's negative policies, and is taking action in response.

The UNSC has been able to pass five resolutions, three of which include sanctions. Some governments are also taking unilateral actions outside the UN framework.

If you look across the Iranian economic landscape and compare it to that of other countries with similar resource endowments, Iran is lagging far behind in international investment and in its ability to attract modern technology. This can be contributed in part to higher risk associated with doing business with Iran, but also to some unity within the international community as to the unacceptability of doing business with Iran. For example, just last week, we saw the UK designation of Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line (IRISL). IRISL is the primary shipping line for Iranian cargo; it has been designated by the U.S. for proliferation activity and noted as a proliferation concern in UNSCR1803, and the Islamic Republican Guard Corps (IRGC) is heavily invested in the company. This sanction will take a toll on IRISL's ability to operate and profit from its activities. We are encouraging other nations to adopt similar measures.

On the topic of IRISL, we have also seen active support from states in increasing their monitoring of Iranian vessels. In the last year, governments have come together to support the interdiction and seizure of two IRISL ships, both carrying weapons-related material in violation of UNSCR 1803. Both cases, the MV MONCHEGORSK and the MV HANSA, have been filed with the UN's Iran Sanctions Committee.

The recent revelation of the clandestine enrichment facility under construction in Qom has only strengthened the sense of purpose and unity amongst our allies and partners.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#14)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

What particular sanctions are working and what can we be doing to make these sanctions more effective?

**Answer:**

Imposing sanctions on Iran can be and has been an effective tool, when designed and implemented effectively and combined with other elements of our overall strategy.

Beginning in 2006, the USG began a concerted effort to step up our targeting of Iran's illicit conduct. We took formal action against many of the specific banks, government entities, companies, and people involved in Iran's support for terrorism and its proliferation activities. Multilaterally, we have pursued progressively broader sanctions against Iran in the United Nations Security Council sanctions through the adoption of resolutions 1737, 1747, and 1803. We have also worked with the international financial community through the Financial Action Task Force to issue multiple statements highlighting risks

posed by Iran to the international financial system and calling for states to respond to this threat.

As a result, the cost of doing business with Iran has increased. Iran's credit risk rating has gone up, and many banks have stopped issuing letters of credit to companies seeking to do business with Iran. Numerous large international banks have responded to growing concerns about Iran by ceasing or significantly reducing their business with Iran. Consistent with the UN Security Council's call on member states, the European Union has also adopted measures to limit granting export credits. As a result, a number of European countries have worked successfully to reduce their export credit exposure to Iran, making it more difficult for Iran to finance its international trade.

These measures, combined with Iran's systemic economic mismanagement and declining world oil prices, have put intense budgetary pressures on the Iranian government. Iran has an ongoing current account deficit and a projected fiscal deficit of over 13 percent of GDP for the current year. Current economic data indicates that it is becoming increasingly difficult for the Government of Iran to fund its gasoline subsidy program through its Oil Stabilization Fund. It has repeatedly raided this Fund not only to fund the subsidy program, but to fund various other government expenditures, as well.

We look forward to continuing to engage with Congress on the best ways to further our shared interest in addressing Iran's illicit behaviors, calibrated according to whatever progress we are making on the engagement track. We will continue to review legislative proposals to ensure that they allow the administration to execute the President's policy of direct diplomacy, and to ensure consistency with the President's authorities.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#15)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

What more can the Arab states do to assist in stopping Iran's nuclear ambitions? Recent press reports indicate we have asked Japan and China to lessen their Iranian oil purchases while encouraging Gulf States to increase their supplies to serve as a replacement. What can you tell us about these efforts?

**Answer:**

We have been consulting with our regional partners to develop close cooperation to manage the political, diplomatic, and security challenges Iran poses. These include partners' support for five UN Security Resolutions on Iran; increased vigilance and action against Iranian efforts to evade sanctions; the GCC-plus-3 forum intended in part to discuss Iran; and increased U.S. security and military cooperation with the Gulf states. We have encouraged our regional partners to assist in our efforts to reduce international reliance on Iranian natural resources as a way to sharpen the choice for Iran – either opt to comply with nuclear obligations or face further isolation.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#16)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

As you may know, a number of states have already begun to divest over one billion dollars in stock of companies that publicly acknowledge investments that run counter to the Act. Further, the Department of Energy, the General Accounting Office and the Congressional Research Service have all identified companies making proscribed investments. Why have many states and federal agencies found foreign investments in Iran's oil while the State Department has not found even one?

**Answer:**

We carefully track and follow up on reports of new energy deals with Iran in light of the Act.

We have seen the letter recently sent to President Obama by 50 members of Congress expressing concern over the current enforcement of the ISA. We understand your concerns and are reviewing the status of foreign investments in Iran's petroleum industry, including those identified in the Congressional letter. In about 45 days, we will make a preliminary finding as to which cases might warrant a formal investigation under the ISA. We look forward to working with the committee once we have completed our review.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#17)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

In June 2008, before our full committee, Under Secretary of State William Burns stated that there was a review of the Norwegian company Statoil Hydro's activities to determine whether they breached the Iran Sanctions Act. The company openly acknowledges that as of the end of 2008 they had invested more than \$225 million in Iran's South Pars gas field. Can you please update the committee on the status of this investigation and why no determination has been made?

**Answer:**

After Under Secretary Burns' testimony, the State Department met with several high-ranking officials of the company to discuss concerns related to that particular deal. In August 2008, partially as the result of our review, Statoil made a public announcement that it would not undertake any new activities in Iran. To our knowledge, no new deals have been reached between Statoil and Iran during that time. In light of the recent Congressional letter sent to the President identifying twenty companies including Statoil as possibly in violation of ISA, we are reviewing the case again.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#18)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

Does the Obama Administration support targeted sanctions against providers of refined petroleum to Iran?

**Answer:**

We are continuing to consider the efficacy of sanctions imposed on suppliers of refined petroleum. We are concerned that, if such a measure were imposed unilaterally, it would be extremely difficult to enforce due to the global nature of the gasoline market and the large number of suppliers and producers. That is why we believe that multi-lateral sanctions taken by the largest possible group of states would be more effective than unilateral ones.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#19)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

Have we encouraged companies that continue to provide refined petroleum to Iran to stop? For example, have we asked the Swiss government to stop Swiss companies Vitol and Trafigura from shipping refined petroleum to Iran?

**Answer:**

We regularly and aggressively reach out to foreign governments and commercial entities to scale back voluntarily their own economic engagement with Iran. We have had discussions with the Swiss government regarding Vitol and Trafigura and continue to press them to halt or slow down their dealings with Iran.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#20)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

Have we encouraged the Honeywell Corporation to stop its subsidiary Universal Oil Products from assisting Iran's expansion of its domestic refining capability?

**Answer:**

We have had discussions with the Honeywell Corporation to express our concerns regarding their subsidiaries activities in Iran and urged them not to pursue any new business there. In response, they committed not to engage in any new projects in Iran. We plan to continue our discussions with the company.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#21)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

If a resolution on the Goldstone report comes before the UN Security Council, will the U.S. exercise its veto?

**Answer:**

We are working with the other members of the Security Council, including all permanent members, to ensure that a Goldstone resolution does not come before the council. I will not speculate on what steps we might take next. We strongly disagree with many of the report's recommendations, including that the report be taken up by the UN Security Council. We firmly oppose referral of the allegations in the Goldstone report to the ICC.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#22)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

During the vote at the UNHRC, Britain and France did not vote on the resolution. Do we know why? Are you disappointed with their choice not to take a position? What are doing to gain their support and that of other nations? What are we doing to ensure the report is not brought before the Security Council?

**Answer:**

We understand that France and Britain absented themselves from the HRC prior to a vote on the resolution per instructions from their capitals. We had hoped that they would cast a “no” vote, as did several other states (Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Ukraine, Slovakia, and the United States). We encouraged all HRC members to vote against this biased resolution. We continue to engage other nations, including with Britain and France, to ensure support of as many countries as possible for our position in all UN fora. We are working closely with other Security Council states, including all of the P-5 members, who are all aware of our strong view that the Goldstone Report should not be taken up by the Security Council.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#23)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

President Obama said we joined the UN Human Rights Council to impact policy from within rather than condemning it from the outside. Unfortunately it seems that the Council is still exhibiting the same anti-Israel vitriol it has shown in the past. What more can the U.S. do to stop this anti-Israel bias being conveyed by the Council?

**Answer:**

As Ambassador Rice noted in her October 21 speech in Jerusalem, “The UN must do more to live up to the brave ideals of its founding—and its member states must once and for all replace anti-Israel vitriol with a recognition of Israel’s legitimacy and right to exist in peace and security.” The United States joined the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to influence and refocus the work of the HRC, including taking several steps to halt anti-Israel bias within this body. These steps include pushing for balance on Council actions so that human rights situations around the world receive equal attention, and working with the Palestinians and Arab states to address their concerns in a constructive manner rather than via one-sided resolutions unfairly targeting Israel. We are also working

to remove the permanent agenda item on Israel during the 2011 review of the UNHRC.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#24)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

Could you share with us the status of Senator Mitchell's efforts to restart negotiations?

**Answer:**

President Obama and Secretary Clinton continue to be deeply and personally committed to launching successful negotiations, and our goal is to do so as soon as possible. The United States is continuing its engagement with all stakeholders in this effort, and Special Envoy Mitchell is in intense discussions with the Israelis and Palestinians in order to work out a framework for those negotiations that will enable them to succeed. We continue to reiterate to the parties what President Obama has been saying all along, that it is past time to talk about starting negotiations, and it is time to move forward. Once negotiations commence, we will work with the parties to determine the most successful path to take.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#25)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

What are we doing to encourage the Palestinians to drop their preconditions to the start of negotiations?

**Answer:**

As Secretary Clinton reported to the President on October 22, challenges remain as the United States continues to work with both sides to re-launch negotiations in an atmosphere in which they can succeed. We are determined to stay the course until the job is done. There is a sense of urgency, a sense of involvement and commitment on the part of the President, the Secretary, and Special Envoy Mitchell.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#26)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

What are you and Secretary Clinton doing to stop Palestinian incitement, including recent provocations related to the Temple Mount?

**Answer:**

We remain actively engaged with the Palestinian Authority to ensure that it continues to take actions in line with its commitments under the Roadmap, including actions to halt incitement against Israel. We continue to engage with both the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel so that neither side takes steps that lead to destabilizing actions within Jerusalem.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#27)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

President Abbas recently announced parliamentary and presidential elections for this January. Given the status of Gaza, is this possible? What happens if elections are not able to be held or are only held in the West Bank?

**Answer:**

Holding elections is a matter for the Palestinians to decide. We have consistently expressed our support for a Palestinian unity government that accepts the Quartet Principles of renouncing violence, accepting past agreements, and recognizing Israel's right to exist. President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad are the legitimate leaders of the Palestinian Authority. Both President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad are committed to delivering a Palestinian state through negotiations. Our focus remains on re-launching negotiations that lead to the establishment of a viable, independent Palestinian state that fulfills the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to determine their own destiny. To play a role in fulfilling Palestinian aspirations of establishing a Palestinian state, Hamas must accept the Quartet Principles.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#28)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

What specific steps can the U.S. take to encourage the Arab States to normalize relations with Israel?

**Answer:**

We are asking all parties to take serious, historic steps that will help lay the foundation for successful negotiations that will lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel and comprehensive regional peace. For the Arab states, this means taking concrete steps towards normalization of their relations with Israel. These steps could include, but are not limited to, overflight privileges and the opening of trade offices. We have urged Arab states to build on the Arab Peace Initiative by sending clear, consistent messages, through statements and concrete gestures, concerning their desire for peace.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#29)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

The Saudis are a key to normalization between the Arab States and Israel. What role do we envision the Saudis taking and why haven't they been more active in employing peace-enhancing gestures?

**Answer:**

Saudi Arabia remains a key partner in our efforts to promote a comprehensive peace in the Middle East, and we are continuing to work intensively with Riyadh to improve the climate for negotiations to resume. Saudi Arabia has led the Arab states in proposing the Arab Peace Initiative, which lays out a vision for eventual normalization of Arab relations with Israel. We have urged Saudi Arabia and the other Arab states to build on the Arab Peace Initiative by sending clear, consistent messages, through statements and concrete gestures, concerning their desire for peace. Everyone, including all of the Arab states, has a responsibility to take steps to help ensure the success of peace negotiations. We have also asked Saudi Arabia and the other Arab states to continue to support peace by providing critical support, both political and financial, for the Palestinian Authority as it seeks to build the foundations for a future Palestinian state. We

appreciated the \$200 million donation that Saudi Arabia provided to the Palestinian Authority in August and urge other Arab states to support the PA with budget assistance.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#30)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

Has Senator Mitchell made any progress in his discussions with the Saudis and other Arab countries on these issues?

**Answer:**

The President's focus on realizing a comprehensive peace in the Middle East has been welcomed throughout the Arab world, including in Saudi Arabia. Senator Mitchell has held extensive consultations with the Saudi leadership as part of our efforts to move this difficult issue forward. He has made two visits to Riyadh, and he has met with his Saudi counterparts elsewhere, including in Washington. The governments of several Arab states have indicated to us that they are prepared to take important, concrete steps towards greater contact with Israel in the context of significant steps by Israel towards peace. Indicative of this positive spirit on the part of many Arab states, in July, Bahraini Crown Prince Sheikh Salman bin Hamad al Khalifa published an Op-ed in the Washington Post urging Arab states to reach out to Israel in order to generate progress toward Middle East peace.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#31)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

What will be our position on aid to Lebanon if we find that they can't form a sustainable government?

**Answer:**

Our economic and security assistance to Lebanon is designed to strengthen the institutions of the Lebanese state, helping to prevent violence and political deadlock. In the event that the current cabinet impasse continues, we plan to continue our assistance. Day-to-day implementation of our various programs would continue in this scenario, under the authority of the caretaker government. Importantly, we also plan to continue our aid to various non-governmental partners in Lebanon working to promote the political and economic reforms crucial to building Lebanon's democratic institutions and the creation of a vibrant civil society. At the same time, our robust safeguards, including vetting procedures and end-use monitoring of defense articles, will remain in place to ensure that Hizballah or other foreign terrorist organizations do not benefit from our assistance.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#32)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

I have heard reports that hostilities might be renewed if a government is not formed. What is the likelihood of an armed conflict in Lebanon?

**Answer:**

The risk of armed conflict in Lebanon remains a constant concern due to the presence of numerous militant groups. The Hizballah-instigated violence of May 2008 illustrated all too clearly the danger of armed confrontation in Lebanon, while the recent spate of security incidents in south Lebanon highlights the volatile situation on the ground. Against this backdrop, strengthening the institutions of the Lebanese state, including the Lebanese Armed Forces, remains the best means of ensuring stability in Lebanon. We must continue working with our partners in Lebanon to enable the government of Lebanon to extend its authority throughout the country. We will encourage Lebanon's next government to move quickly to undertake the political and economic reforms needed to create a strong and stable Lebanese state.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#33)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

Recently, Lebanon was elected to a seat on the UN Security Council (UNSC). Will this action assist Hariri and moderate forces to form a government? And if not, how can we expect a country with no government to effectively serve as a member of the Security Council?

**Answer:**

Lebanon will take up its rotating seat on the Security Council on January 1, 2010; we fully expect a government to be formed by this time. However, should Lebanon's cabinet negotiations continue, we expect the current caretaker cabinet to continue its duties, including action on relevant UNSC matters. Lebanese President Sleiman also will continue to play an important leadership role in shaping Lebanon's foreign policy and its role on the Security Council. As with all newly elected Security Council members, we will hold high-level consultations with the Lebanese to discuss our priorities for the Security Council's upcoming agenda. We look forward to working with Lebanon to continue the Security Council's efforts to address issues critical to the maintenance of international peace and security.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#34)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

Given Hizballah's close relationship with Iran, there is much speculation that Lebanon will abstain from voting on any Iran related resolutions in the Security Council. Will this weaken the ability of the international community to address the Iranian nuclear program and Tehran's refusal to abide by international law? Have you spoken to Lebanon about its ability to contribute to discussions of important security issues in the Middle East? Are you confident in its ability to contribute to the Security Council?

**Answer:**

We look forward to working with Lebanon to continue the Security Council's efforts to address issues critical to the maintenance of international peace and security, including Iran's nuclear program. Lebanon will be pulled in various directions by the competing allegiances, national and international, that characterize its unity cabinet, but we expect it to play a full and active role in the Security Council. Lebanese officials tell us their voting will be guided by Arab League consensus, and that they will abstain from voting on issues pertaining directly to Lebanon, per Article 27(3) of the UN charter. As with all newly elected Security Council members, we will

hold high-level consultations with the Lebanese to discuss our priorities for the Security Council's upcoming agenda.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#35)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

Will it be made clear and publicly stated that the United States is not plotting to impose on the Lebanese a solution for the Palestinian refugees? (Special Envoy George Mitchell made recently a good statement in that regard during a visit to Lebanon. More of these are needed.)

**Answer:**

As Special Envoy Mitchell stated in Beirut, and as I reiterated in my testimony, Israeli-Palestinian peace will not come at Lebanon's expense. We share Lebanese concerns that the naturalization of 400,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon would upset their country's delicate confessional balance. At the same time, we are sensitive to the social, economic, and political marginalization of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. We also recognize that this marginalization drives radicalization and violence in Lebanon's refugee camps. As we continue working toward a comprehensive regional peace and the creation of a Palestinian state as a home for all Palestinians, we encourage the Lebanese government to continue its efforts to improve living conditions in its refugee camps.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#36)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

Given Hizballah's continued refusal to abide by the Taif Accords which ended the Lebanese Civil War and also in light of Hizballah's recent attack on Beirut in May 2008, do you believe that Hizballah has been a positive force in Lebanese democracy?

**Answer:**

Hizballah's arms, which stand in violation of the Taif Agreement and various Security Council resolutions, are fundamentally incompatible with Lebanon's democratic processes. By turning its weapons against its fellow citizens in May 2008, Hizballah also betrayed a promise never to use force against the Lebanese people and belied its claims to be a nationalist organization working to defend Lebanon. We welcome Hizballah's participation in Lebanese politics on one condition: that the group play by the same rules as other Lebanese political parties, including by fully disarming. Until then, we condemn the fear and intimidation that Hizballah's arms bring to Lebanon's political arena as well as the risk of conflict they invite in Lebanon and the region.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#37)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

Do you believe that Hizballah's participation in politics has helped to de-radicalize the terrorist group?

**Answer:**

Hizballah's decisions in 1992 to compete in Lebanon's parliamentary elections and in 2005 to join Lebanon's cabinet have not been complemented by steps toward Hizballah's full disarmament as required by the Taif Agreement and various Security Council resolutions. Hizballah's weapons continue to polarize Lebanese politics and drive a dangerous cycle of arming and radicalization by other groups in Lebanon. Hizballah continues to operate as a militant non-state actor outside the authority of Lebanon's democratically elected government. While political participation may bind Hizballah more closely to the interests of its political constituents, its weapons also continue to put them at grave risk. This was tragically demonstrated by the Hizballah-provoked war with Israel in 2006. Additionally, recent revelations of Hizballah military and terrorist activity in Egypt, Azerbaijan, and Iraq demonstrate that, rather than de-radicalizing, the

group is expanding its violent pursuits throughout the region.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#38)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

Would you recommend that Hizballah be a model that other terrorist organizations seek to emulate? And would this be helpful for U.S. policy in the Middle East and beyond?

**Answer:**

Our position on Hizballah is unchanged. Hizballah is a terrorist organization that operates illegally outside the authority of the Lebanese state and in contravention of a number of UN Security Council resolutions. Hizballah remains a danger to Lebanon and to the region. Nothing about the leadership and funding of the group suggests that it is divided into discrete terrorist, military, political, or social wings. Should Hizballah renounce terrorism, both in Lebanon and abroad, and acknowledge the authority of the Lebanese state, we would reconsider this status.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#39)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

In your opinion, what does the near-term future hold for U.S.-Syrian relations? What does Syria need to do to improve our ties? Has Syria done anything to deserve the return of the U.S. Ambassador to Damascus?

**Answer:**

The near-term future of U.S.-Syrian relations depends largely on the next steps on areas of interest that have been identified during our initial engagement of the Syrian government. Our visits to Damascus, and a reciprocal visit of the Syrian Vice Foreign Minister to Washington, have begun to re-establish relationships between the two countries that had languished during several years without regular senior-level communication. While both parties recognize the potential importance of an improved relationship, confidence-building measures must now be taken to ensure that our engagement goes beyond just rhetoric and can produce tangible results.

The Syrians agreed to our first confidence-building measure: a Trilateral Border Assessment of the Syrian side of the Iraqi border with U.S. military participation. Unfortunately, security incidents in Iraq left us

unable to move forward with the assessment as planned. Since that time, we have been negotiating possible alternative confidence-building measures that would enable us to determine Syrian intentions on some of our areas of concern.

With regards to the return of an Ambassador, the previous U.S. Ambassador to Damascus was recalled after the February 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. Since that February, political circumstances in Lebanon and Syria have changed significantly, including the April 2005 Syrian military withdrawal from Lebanon. Syria and Lebanon now enjoy full diplomatic relations, following their exchange of Ambassadors in March 2009. Syria has repeatedly voiced its commitment to Lebanon's sovereignty and independence and we will continue to press the Syrian government to follow through on these statements and to support the full implementation of all relevant UN Security Council resolutions on Lebanon, including resolutions 1559, 1680, and 1701. Delineation of the Lebanese-Syrian border would be an important step in this regard.

Without a U.S. Ambassador in Damascus, we have an asymmetrical relationship with the Syrian government that is delaying the pace of our engagement at a time when our regional priorities – Arab-Israeli peace and

addressing the threat posed by Iran – demand that we accelerate it.

Consequently, the continued absence of a U.S. Ambassador no longer serves to isolate the Asad regime, but in fact only isolates ourselves and constrains our ability to work for U.S. interests.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#40)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

What is the Administration doing to ensure that the rights and security of these vulnerable minorities are sufficiently protected as the U.S. military draws down its presence in Iraq?

**Answer:**

Our policy is to work with the Government of Iraq (GOI) to increase its ability to protect its entire population, including its minority communities. Following the attacks on six churches in July 2009 in Baghdad, Ambassador Hill immediately met with minority leaders and relayed their concerns to the highest levels of the GOI, including the Prime Minister. We were encouraged to see Iraqi Vice President Adel Abdul Mehdi and GOI Spokesperson Ali-al-Dabbagh issue separate statements condemning the attacks and denouncing these attempts to spark sectarian conflict. Additionally, the GOI immediately increased its presence at Christian places of worship in Baghdad.

The Secretary recently appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) for Iraq, Michael Corbin, as our Coordinator for Iraq's Minorities Communities. In this capacity DAS Corbin continues to oversee the implementation of

over \$20 million in assistance to minority communities in response to two Congressional directives. These projects have focused on humanitarian issues, economic development and educational training. A recent project focused on cleanup and removal of debris following bombing attacks in a predominately minority community.

As the military reduces its footprint in Iraq, the plight of Iraq's minority community and the transition of our police training program from the Department of Defense to the Department of State will remain a high priority. A key element of this training program is to build the capacity of a cross-sectarian police force that protects all of its citizens, including minorities.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman by  
Representative Dan Burton (#41)  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
October 28, 2009**

**Question:**

Does the Administration have any specific policies to improve the situation of minorities in Iraq?

**Answer:**

Our policy is to work with the Government of Iraq (GOI) to address the concerns of Iraq's minority communities. As President Obama stated on July 23 after his meeting with Prime Minister Maliki, "Iraq will be more secure and successful if there is a place for all Iraqi citizens to thrive, including all of Iraq's ethnic and religious groups."

The Secretary recently appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) for Iraq, Michael Corbin, as our Coordinator for Iraq's Minorities Communities. DAS Corbin and our Embassy colleagues meet frequently with minority groups both in the U.S. and in Iraq and raise their issues of concern with the highest levels of the GOI.

We will remain deeply engaged on these issues and will continue to help build the capacity of a non-sectarian Iraqi Security Force that includes representation from all of Iraq's communities. Following the January 2010

national elections, we will also press Iraqi leaders to form a government that is representative of Iraq's people and will encourage the appointment of minorities and women to senior government posts. We hope the Council of Representatives will decide to provide set-aside seats for minorities in the upcoming national elections. Such a quota would serve as a floor, not ceiling, for minority representation.

DAS Corbin and our Embassy will continue to oversee the implementation of over \$20 million in projects for minority communities in response to two Congressional directives. Even though the Department has completed these directives by allotting over \$20 million for minority communities, the plight of minorities in Iraq remains a high priority for us. Therefore our Provincial Reconstruction Teams and other USG entities will continue to provide assistance to these groups in the short and long-term.