

**Statement by William H. Luers  
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Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate**

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Chairman Lugar, Senator Biden, distinguished members of the Committee on Foreign Relations, it is an honor to testify before you today on the subject of Iran. I speak on behalf of a group of Americans who have been involved in discussions with Iranians over the past year. These informal talks have touched on many of the issues that this committee is addressing in this important and long needed hearing. We congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your efforts to encourage a public discussion on Iran and the U.S. interests engaged in our relationship with that pivotal nation.

I am pleased to be back testifying before this Committee nearly two decades since I left the Foreign Service. During my career with the Department of State I was privileged to have had several opportunities to testify on matters related to the Soviet Union, Cuba and Latin American—regional issues in which I was professionally involved. I come before you today, therefore, not as an Iranian expert—and there are precious few of them given our twenty-year gap of official relations with that country—or as an expert on the Middle East. My credentials flow from:

- Decades in helping to engage U.S. relations with the former Soviet Union including arms control, negotiations, and cultural exchanges. I served as Ambassador to Czechoslovakia.
- Over a decade of engagement with Latin America including issues of political and economic development and cultural exchanges. I served as Ambassador to Venezuela.
- Over 13 years as President of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, during which time I became even more appreciative of the essential role of cultural understanding in international affairs.
- Discussions with Iranians that a group of Americans have been holding regularly over the past year.

### **Introduction**

The United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA) began to lead these discussions with a group of Iranian policy experts following UNA-USA's involvement in the United Nations effort to begin "A Dialogue among Civilizations," which was first proposed by Iran's President Khatami. President Khatami and U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan thought it worthwhile for an international effort to be undertaken to discuss and explore the opportunities that might be

available to avoid the “Clash of Civilizations” predicted by Sam Huntington in his prescient article and book of that title. The culminating report of the “Dialogue Among Civilizations” was presented to the U.N. General Assembly in November 2001, only weeks after September 11th. President Khatami, who spoke at the General Assembly on the topic, chose that moment to denounce Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden directly, underscoring that the terrorist attacks were in no way representative of Islam. Let me remind you that the United Nations system is the only setting in which Western nations deal regularly with Arab states and with the numerous states where the one billion followers of Islam live. That is one more reason why the United Nations is an important place – it offers a place in which the United States can work to develop greater understanding and reduce tensions with Islamic states over the years to come.

The discussions that UNA-USA has been conducting began almost a year ago. They have been held in a multilateral setting and have involved a group of Iranian academics and policy advisers acting in their individual capacities. During this period we have had access to official Iranian thinking. These talks have been off-the-record and included representatives of at least one other nation. We have met four times over the past year. The Rockefeller Brothers Fund and several other prominent American foundations have been the sponsors of these talks. We have met in Europe and have not met either in the United States or Iran for any of these conversations. We understand from the Iranians and from our American colleagues that, although there had been many informal efforts at policy dialogues with Iran in the decade before the current administration, virtually all of those efforts have dried up. Also, there are some continuing rich academic interactions with Iran on the part of a number of individual American scholars and there are journalists who still have unusual personal access to Iranian society. We understand that this UNA-USA set of discussions is the only one today that is seeking to carry out a broad policy discussion on U.S.-Iranian relations.

The U.S. side has been composed of prominent former diplomats and officials and representatives of the private sector. It is a non-partisan group in its approach and composition. The President of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Stephen Heintz, one of the initiators of this set of discussions, has essentially co-chaired this effort from the American side and has participated in all of the meetings.

Our intentions are to continue these informal discussions over the coming months and years with the following objectives:

- (1) To expand the number and variety of Americans exposed to these important issues;
- (2) To extend our access to the Iranian policy community and society;
- (3) To continue to encourage the United States Government and the Iranian Government to undertake direct official conversations; and
- (4) To offer suggestions on ways in which the United States might better handle the potentially serious threats to U.S. security interests in the Middle East that could result from the current deeply flawed policy direction that the United States Government is taking toward Iran and its engagement in the region.

## Iranian Attitudes

The Iranians have expressed very informally their concerns about stagnation at home in Iran, the inability of the current Iranian governing structure to carry out political and economic reforms, and the potential instability in their neighborhood, including grave concerns about Pakistan, which is one reason they have been seeking a strategic alliance with India. **At the same time, they make clear that, whatever their concerns are about the current Iranian governing structure, it is not about to collapse. The U.S. intelligence community agrees with that assessment. No one we have talked to in the U.S. intelligence community believes that the troubled and cleric dominated Iranian system is on the verge of any sort of implosion, even though one hears such claims on occasion from U.S. policy makers.**

Most importantly, the Iranians have expressed concern about U.S. policies toward Iran. They say that Iranian officials believe that dealing with the United States is particularly difficult for Iran since the U.S. does not seek “policy change” on the part of the Iranian government but “regime change” and nothing short of “regime change” will satisfy the U.S. From public official U.S. statements and the general impression they have had from the few direct talks with U.S. officials, Iranians claim that they are discouraged from making any steps toward ameliorating some U.S. objections to Iranian behavior because the U.S. will always require more “concessions” until the Iranian government is overthrown or removed. The Iranians say that the U.S. does not seem prepared to make comparable steps to encourage movement toward resolution of some of the core issues. **They would be far more ready to discuss the core issues between the two nations and engage in negotiations with the United States if they believed that U.S. policy was committed not to the overthrow of the current Iranian system, but to working toward mutually beneficial steps.**

At the same time, the Iranians say they are feeling more confident today than perhaps during any time since the Iranian revolution due to the U.S. elimination of Iran’s two neighboring enemy regimes—the Taliban and Saddam Hussein—and an Iranian perception that the U.S. will be preoccupied with Iraq for some time. This sense of confidence can obviously be a mixed blessing for American interests in the region. We believe that the U.S. should try to play to this confidence rather than fight it as a strategy moving forward. **If Iran, for its own economic and security reasons, wants to return gradually to playing a more constructive role the international community, the U.S. should take some steps to enable this to happen since that will offer the best available opportunity to reduce Iran’s support for terrorism and other troubling activities in the region.**

We recognize that it is difficult to know who speaks for Iran and whether the U.S. government would be able to deal with an Iranian group that has the authority to make the decisions the U.S. would seek. Nevertheless, based on our discussions, we believe that this moment offers an important opportunity to seek some movement from the Iranian government on issues of great significance to U.S. interests in the region. **Most particularly, we think the Iranians are now intensely focused on how best to preserve their own national security as the environment in their neighborhood is changing dramatically.** If both governments do not undertake mutually reinforcing steps to ease the differences, we believe that the uncertainty about each other’s intentions could heighten tensions and lead Iran away from potential cooperation with the U.S.

toward more confrontational policies and perhaps toward taking further steps to acquire nuclear weapons. This is an appropriate time to respond to Iranian overtures and to try to dissuade Iran from pursuing such strategies.

### **Talking About the Nuclear Issues**

On the nuclear issue, we have heard the official Iranian line that, despite the IAEA's findings, Iran still has no intention to build nuclear weapons, but needs a nuclear capacity for power (citing similar nuclear power facilities in the U.S. and Russia which have substantial fossil fuel energy resources) and for scientific work. The official line also maintains that nuclear weapons would be unlikely to increase Iran's security and that the Supreme Leader opposes the development of nuclear weapons on moral and religious grounds. Yet in private conversations, the Iranians have told us that there is a serious debate in policy circles about nuclear weapons. They also say that there is probably an intention on the part of some elements of the Iranian governing structure to have at least the capacity to build such weapons, but that Iran does not have the capability yet and has not taken a firm decision on this matter. We have been told that the Iranian government would reject any offer of a package of agreements (such as is being discussed in connection with North Korea) that would link proposals regarding Iran's security to discussions of discontinuing the nuclear fuel cycle since such an approach would implicitly suggest that Iran was seeking its nuclear capacity for reasons of national security, i.e. nuclear weapons.

We welcome Tehran's announcement that it intends to sign and ratify the additional protocol agreement under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and temporarily suspend uranium enrichment activities. We believe that these hopeful steps are in the right direction and are in line with the recommendations we have been making to both governments over the past several months. We remain concerned that, should these current promising indicators not result in a longer term shift in the approach on both sides, Iran and the Western countries will remain on a course that will result in the IAEA referring the Iranian violations to the U.N. Security Council, with the possibility of sanctions being brought against Iran. We do not believe that UNSC sanctions, even if strongly supported initially by all of the European powers and China, will help to change Iran's still ambiguous intentions with regard to the capacity to build nuclear weapons. Indeed, prolonged sanctions would more likely lead them toward an increased sense of isolation and toward a decision to acquire nuclear weapons. From what we have heard from the Iranians, the perception that the U.S. is mobilizing world opinion against Iran makes it less likely that admonishments by the U.S. will have positive results. **Indeed, we have strongly recommended that the United States Government remain in the background of negotiations with Iran on nuclear issues and that these discussions should be conducted primarily in the context of the IAEA and with key European governments.**

In this connection, it would be useful to consider a phased course of action to address the nuclear issue. I understand that Robert Einhorn, who has participated in UNA-USA's discussions with the Iranians, will be providing further thoughts on this matter in his testimony today before the Committee. In addition, we have been told that Iranians might agree to permit Western technical personnel and specialists to remain in Iran indefinitely to monitor the Iranian nuclear facilities. In

return for opening up their country to a permanent monitoring presence from the West, the Iranians, we are told, would want Western support in the development of Iran's peaceful uses nuclear program. We have no assurance that these initiatives will be successful, but we believe that the United States should continue to support Western European expansion of such discussions with Iran at this time.

If the British, French and Germans, together with the IAEA (supported quietly by the U.S.), are able to work out an arrangement by which Iran is encouraged to step back from a full fuel cycle in connection with its peaceful nuclear program, then U.S. discussions with Iran on Iraq in a multilateral context could be even more productive.

### **Talking about Iraq**

Throughout the course of our discussions over the past year, the Iranians reiterated their interest in engaging in talks with the United States at an official level on key issues of concern, especially with regard to Iraq. In fact, the Iranians stated that Iraq has the potential to become a constructive bridge-issue that could enable discussions on matters of broader mutual interest to the U.S. and Iran. They said that the more the U.S. begins to learn about the Shia through dealing with Iraq, the more the U.S. will understand Iran and the Shia. They also characterized this as a momentous time for security in the region and suggested that the U.S. will come to understand that the Shia and Iran itself are moving toward a more moderate stance on regional and religious matters. We are well aware that over the past decade Iranians have offered to have official discussions with the U.S. Government on a variety of subjects, but when the time has come for such talks, obstacles appear. **We believe that it is in U.S. interests to persist in testing these Iranian offers to have discussions since the U.S. can only benefit from such discussions, particularly given the new situation in Iraq.**

We have been impressed by several aspects of Iran's policies toward Iraq. The Iranians claim that Iran was the only country in the region to strongly endorse the Governing Council in Iraq. They say that the Governing Council in Iraq was well selected and will be able to form the basis of an interim Iraqi government. While strongly critical of the U.S. "occupation" of Iraq, our Iranian counterparts say they realize that the U.S. will be in the neighborhood for a long time and that Iranian and U.S. interests in Iraq generally coincide as they have often coincided in Afghanistan. They claim that there is general agreement among the various Iranian governing entities on a policy toward Iraq that reflects a desire for cooperation with the U.S. in Iraq. Yet, despite official U.S. government stated policies and actions, the Iranians continue to be deeply concerned by the support that the U.S. is giving in Iraq to the Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MeK).

We expressed much skepticism about this U.S. and Iranian coincidence of interests in Iraq and the Iranians did not deny that individual Iranian organizations, such as the Revolutionary Guard or some conservative clerics, might well be carrying out activities that are unhelpful to U.S. efforts. One Iranian participant said that Iran was "pre-positioning itself" in Iraq just in case the U.S. were to try to use Iraq as a platform for launching attacks against Iran or to destabilize the Iranian regime. There have been occasional menacing observations in the otherwise cautiously

supportive attitude on the part of these Iranians. For instance, they have warned that we should know that Iran has the means to make it very difficult for the U.S. in Iraq.

Yet despite their disappointment about the decision last May on the part of the United States to cut off the Geneva discussions with Iran on Iraq, it is our understanding that **the government may be prepared to respond favorably to a U.S. initiative to renew such talks in an appropriate multilateral setting such as the 6+2 talks that were held on Afghanistan.**

**On a related note, the Iranians continue to underscore with us their willingness to consult on Afghanistan.** If no other forum can be found, they would welcome a reconvening of the “6+2” mechanism—including Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Iran, Pakistan and China, plus the U.S. and Russia. The aim of such a meeting would be a reinforcing of President Karzai’s ability to get the job done.

### **Other Issues: Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Hezbollah, Al Qaeda**

While our discussions in recent months have concentrated on the nuclear and Iraqi issues in view of their immediacy, we have dealt regularly with U.S. concerns over terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We believe that this set of issues is the most difficult and it is unlikely that we can anticipate change in Iranian policy and behavior in these areas until there is some positive movement on the Middle East peace process. **However, we see some possibility for Iranian movement on the Al Qaeda issue.**

**Israel.** Iran’s official policy against Israel has not changed, although its line on the peace process changed some time ago. It did not oppose the road map *per se*, but expressed strong doubts about its success. The official position remains that if Palestine should reach a two-state agreement with Israel, Iran would be supportive. The Arab-Israeli conflict is on the lower end of the list of priority issues for Iran because the domestic political context is not ready for a retreat on this issue and because Israel is not today seen as an existential threat to Iran. Moreover, it is unlikely that the Iranians will become helpful on this issue. The most the U.S. can hope for at the present time is to reduce their motivation to be harmful. In sum, a substantial change in the Iranian position on this issue is not likely.

**Hezbollah.** Iran’s support of Hezbollah is a critical source of U.S.-Iranian tension. Hezbollah is viewed, particularly within U.S. intelligence circles, as an international terrorist organization whose global reach equals or extends beyond that of Al-Qaeda. In addition, a major U.S. concern continues to be Hezbollah’s implacable opposition to any two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. With Iraq in a state of instability and the continuing bloodshed between the Palestinians and Israelis, Hezbollah could well be tempted to expand its terrorist activities in the region. We have no special knowledge from the Iranians about Hezbollah and suspect that those we are talking to do not have extensive information about the extent of Iranian support for Hezbollah. Yet, from our discussions and general sense of the region today, Hezbollah, while a large potential threat, has been more restrained than might have been anticipated. But more importantly we share the view of Daniel Byman in his article in the current issue of *Foreign Affairs* that “a campaign against it similar to the U.S. effort against Al Qaeda will probably fail

and might even backfire.” The purely military option against Hezbollah will not work. As Byman suggests, the role of Iran will be key to any more complex alternative strategy toward reducing the threat of Hezbollah.

The Iranians say that Hezbollah, very much like Iran itself, has been going through a significant transition over the past decade that the U.S. has not understood. Moreover, the Iranians we have talked to argue that with careful political management and with some future improved prospects for a return to a Middle East peace process, the Hezbollah threat in the region could decline if handled wisely. They argue that there is a strategy that the U.S. could develop that would both diminish external support for Hezbollah and move it more in the direction of pursuing the social and political work that is increasingly defining its primary role in Lebanon. Our Iranian counterparts pointed out that during his visit to Lebanon earlier this year, President Khatami made a conscious effort to address Hezbollah in the context of Lebanese politics and stated that Hezbollah is becoming a legitimate political organization.

Based on our discussions, we have become more convinced that Hezbollah cannot be treated strictly as a military problem. Its reach and potential for action is too great and buried in so many different societies. **The U.S. must begin to understand and manage relationships with the various Shia groups in the region and worldwide and develop multiple strategies to manage this large Hezbollah network. Iran, as a major supporter of Hezbollah, would also be a key player in any broad U.S. strategy to reduce the Hezbollah threat.**

**Al Qaeda.** Iran’s inability to control Al Qaeda operatives within Iran and its failure to turn them over for prosecution is a source of continuing concern to the U.S. Government. Indeed, discussions on Iraq that had begun between some U.S. and Iranian officials in Geneva were broken off by the U.S. over a belief that senior Al Qaeda operating from Iran carried out the terrorist attacks against U.S. targets in Saudi Arabia last May. The Iranian side considered that the U.S. was seriously mistaken to have called off those potentially useful talks on a matter of deep mutual interest. They also claimed that the U.S. had faulty information on the role of Al Qaeda allegedly working from Iran in Saudi Arabia.

In many conversations about Al Qaeda, **we have found the Iranians consistently surprised that the U.S. does not understand the degree to which Iranians are opposed to Al Qaeda.** They say: that they have already returned many (over 500) Al Qaeda prisoners to their countries of origin; that there are some Al Qaeda who are in Iran and cannot be located such as in many other nations including throughout Europe; and that of those who are still held in Iran, many more could be turned over. We have reported to the U.S. Government on several occasions that the Iranians have linked the U.S. continued practical support for the MeK in Iraq to the U.S. effort to get more cooperation from Iran on Al Qaeda. The Iranians say that, **despite the fact that the MeK is declared a terrorist organization by the U.S. and, despite repeated U.S. statements of intentions to disarm and control the MeK in Iraq, there is continuing evidence that the U.S. Defense Department seeks to keep in reserve the possibility of deploying the MeK terrorists in Iraq against Iran as part of a latent plan to destabilize Iran.** The Iranians we talked to say there is a deal possible with regard to Al Qaeda, but they want something in return which will be responsive to Iran’s own fears about terrorism, i.e. solid action to eliminate the MeK as a threat to Iran.

We cannot estimate the number of Al Qaeda in Iran or the degree to which there are dark alliances between Al Qaeda and some components of the complex Iranian governing structure, but we do believe that, through direct discussions and mutually reinforcing actions between the two governments, progress could be made on the Al Qaeda issue with Iran. Just as the U.S. is reluctant to talk to Iran until the Al Qaeda question is dealt with, the Iranians are not prepared to be more forthcoming with Al Qaeda until there is a clear and consistent U.S. policy toward MeK.

The MeK-Al Qaeda issue is a metaphor for the overall relationship between Iran and the United States. One side places preconditions before beginning discussions and before taking constructive actions, and the other side holds back possible actions and concessions as bargaining chips. It is time that this cycle that has blocked forward movement be broken and that each side consider small steps that can be undertaken to send signals, build confidence and engage officially in order to determine whether, over time, significant steps would be possible to reduce tensions.

## **Recommendations**

We have several specific recommendations that flow from our discussions:

- The U.S. Government should support, as a critical first step, the agreement reached by the three European governments and Iran, under which Iran would adhere to the IAEA Additional Protocol and temporarily suspend its uranium enrichment and processing activities. In addition, Iran should cooperate fully with the IAEA and provide to the Agency all the information about its nuclear program requested by the IAEA Board in September. In the longer term, Iran, the IAEA, the Europeans, the United States, and other interested parties should seek to put in place a more durable solution that would provide confidence that Iran is not pursuing a nuclear weapons capability.
- Based on our discussions, we believe that an American initiative to renew the diplomatic conversations on Iraq would be well received by Tehran. We believe that a new group—like the “6+2” group that met on Afghanistan—should be organized by the U.N. Secretary-General. This new grouping might be composed of Iraq’s neighbors plus the permanent five members of the U.N. Security Council. Whether this or another forum is organized, we believe that an opportunity for renewed direct conversations in some multilateral setting would be welcomed by the Iranian government and lead to at least a better understanding of each other’s role and intentions in Iraq
- In the context of renewed U.S. official discussions with Iran on Iraq, we believe that a first priority should be direct exchanges on Al Qaeda. These would lead toward a better understanding of what steps the Iranians would expect the U.S. to undertake with regard to the MeK or other potential threats against Iran that might be causing concern to the Iranians and that might lead to further Iranian and even joint U.S.-Iranian action against Al Qaeda.



- We also believe that there is a range of small steps that each side could take over the coming months that could be seen as confidence building measures for each side to move forward. These steps would begin with the way each side speaks of the other—language is one of the most important signals at the early stage. For example, language in speeches and public statements that suggest that the U.S. is expecting regime change in Iran or is not prepared to deal in any way with the current government of Iran undercut opportunities to have serious discussions and reinforce the impression in Tehran that the US is not serious about any negotiations with Iran.
- We recommend that exchanges between Congressional representatives and members of the Iranian Parliament should be pursued as a way to build confidence and dialogue between our two countries. We are aware that a number of members of Congress have been seeking such exchanges and would be willing to participate. It appears that the Iranians have delayed moving forward, even though they have indicated that they are favorably disposed.
- We recommend that the U.S. begin planning for the establishment of a U.S. presence in Tehran in the form of an American-staffed "U.S. Interests Section" at the Swiss Embassy—similar to what we have in Havana. This would mean a comparable presence of an “Iranian Interests Section” in Washington, D.C. Such planning should not be considered unthinkable now, in view of our deep long term commitment to the region and our need to know much more about the neighborhood. In the Department of State in the mid-1970’s I oversaw two years of planning for such a step toward Cuba. Then, as Acting Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, I negotiated with the Cuban government the establishment of the U.S. diplomatic presence in the “U.S. Interests Section” in Havana in early 1976. Such an act does not imply approval, in any way, of a regime, but allows the United States direct access to the society and provides a vital means for our understanding of a changing and distant culture, such as Iran.

## Conclusion

We see Iran as very different from Saddam Hussein’s Iraq and North Korea—the other two members of the “Axis of Evil.” **The option of direct military action against Iran or even the option of prolonged intensive covert efforts to bring about “regime change” should be discarded.** Such actions would threaten other U.S. interests in the area and likely increase Iran’s interest in seeking nuclear weapons and openly opposing all U.S. activities in the region. Given the fact that Iran borders on and is deeply engaged in two nations which represent some of our most important interests in the region—bringing peace and stability to Iraq and Afghanistan—we do not want Iran to be an implacable, isolated, and even more determined enemy. **Engagement with Iran could serve to advance other U.S. interests, including: a better understanding of the Shia Movement; stability in the Middle East; stemming the proliferation of WMD; and addressing drug trafficking in the region.**

The negative effects to U.S. interests of a long-term strategy of isolating Iran should be recognized. Such a strategy would deprive the United States of the knowledge and ability to relate to one of the most important nations—arguably the “pivotal” nation—in the region and

potentially one of the most troubling. We are placed at a disadvantage by having no direct knowledge of them, often times having to depend on flawed intelligence from “technical means” to evaluate what are deeply human cultural, economic, and political issues in this young and dynamic society.

Formal U.S. conversations with the government of Iran or the establishment of some form of relations with that nation through a diplomatic presence should not in any way reflect approval of Iran’s domestic or international behavior. The U.S. has close relations with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, yet these are two nations, which at a certain level arguably have done or could do great harm to U.S. interests in the region. The U.S. certainly does not approve of all of the internal actions of these two governments. Nor does it approve of many of the domestic actions of the government of China or many other governments whose political and economic systems are so vastly different from ours. **The U.S. does not bestow legitimacy on a government by talking to it. On the contrary, such discussions would provide the most powerful nation in the world the ability to increase the varieties of influences it can bring to bear on a region of vastly growing importance to U.S. interests. The U.S. can promote its democratic values much more effectively by expanding contacts and opening up societies through direct contact over a prolonged period of time. If our objective is to “infect” nations with the ideas of democracy, direct contact works best.**

The U.S. is likely to be militarily, politically and economically involved in the Middle East for decades to come. American involvement there could conceivably reach the scale of its involvement in Europe during the Cold War. Yet we knew Europe. We know little about the Middle East. As the cultural, political, national and religious elements of the Middle East evolve over the next generation, the U.S. will have to develop direct expertise, knowledge and appreciation of the trends in the area. The current course of U.S. policy makes it virtually impossible for the most powerful and information-based society in history to understand the basic elements of Iranian society. **The U.S. is without the personnel, the tools, the language and the knowledge to make informed decisions or to conduct the appropriate diplomatic efforts that can further U.S. interests. This should not be the approach of this great nation.**

Terrorism has become a fundamental threat to American society. Yet, should the U.S. Government persist in dealing with all perceived terrorist threats in purely military terms, it will surely fail and indeed could polarize the nations of the world ever more frighteningly. There is an opportunity today to begin to devise a strategy of engagement with Iran that would be part of a new, more astute political approach to the nuclear and the terrorist threats. **This engagement strategy is more likely over many years of determined effort to produce a far more constructive outcome than the course of confrontation, imposing isolation and military action that currently characterizes U.S. policy. Even though the U.S. military has fought well and bravely, Americans over the long run are better in engagement than in war. Engagement certainly suits better the American traditions and instincts. Engagement also contributes better toward providing the world with a beacon of the United States as a strong nation determined to spread its insights on democracy and liberty.**

Mr. Chairman, it is now within the U.S. Government’s capacity to set a new course that will reduce Iran’s threatening posture and gradually encourage them to pursue a more cooperative

role in the region. This process could take years, and there will be setbacks, but the time to begin is now lest our actions push them dramatically in the opposite direction toward further endangering our interests and those of the entire region.

I hope that these hearings give impetus to the efforts of so many in this country who believe that the time has come for the United States to directly engage Iran, one of the most important and influential nations in the Middle East.