MR. PETER HUESSY: I want to thank you for being here today. My name is Peter Huessy and I’m going to make this as short as I can because we have two speakers today, Clare Lopez and General McInerney, and they’re both going to talk about Iran. And as you know, it’s probably the most serious national security threat we are facing as a country.

And as Masood, the former head of the Northern Alliance, said in a very famous quote in Mr. Coll’s book, “We are facing a poisonous coalition.” It is not just terror groups or states, it’s a combination thereof as well as allied or affiliated groups, including elements within countries such as Syria, China, Russia, Venezuela, Cuba and others, as well as terrorist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, Abu Sayaf and others like al-Qaeda.

I want to thank our sponsors, and in particular the Reserve Officers Association of America, the Air Force Association, and the National Defense Industrial Association for their sponsorship of our group. I want to also thank our friends from Great Britain and from Russia who are here today. I want to pay particular thanks to a naval graduate who volunteered to go to Afghanistan, who has just returned, and that’s Lucas Tomlinson (sp), who is here today at our table.

(Applause).

And just a reminder, for next week, as you know, we have three seminars. Ilan Berman will talk about his trip that he just came back from South and Central America about the connections between Iran and Hezbollah and the FARC and Mr. Chavez of Venezuela. And then Jim Miller is not going to be speaking on the 13th, he’ll be speaking on the 26th of July. He’s re-scheduled because he has to be overseas. And then on Thursday we have Senator Sessions who will be talking to us about the budget implications of the various elements we’re interested in in terms of missile defense, nuclear deterrence and so forth. And then finally on Friday, my favorite rocket scientist in the world, Uzi Rubin, will be coming to give you an update about ballistic missile threats in the Middle East and how that impacts the security of our allies in the Middle East and the United States.

I also want to say I’m honored to have Michelle Bachmann, our Congressman from Minnesota here today.

(Applause).
I want to thank you very much for being here. I have to leave at quarter of and go down to the Press Club and be on TV to talk about global warming and the fraudulent nature of it, and how it affects our U.S. military. But with no further ado, Clare, I’m going to have you come up here and speak first. Would you give a warm welcome to Ms. Clare Lopez?

(Applause).

MS. CLARE LOPEZ: Thank you so much, Peter. And thanks to all of you for coming here this morning. I think it’s a really incredibly important topic that we have to address, and not much time to do it. But what I would like to do is to lay out first of all a little bit of an overview about where we stand vis-à-vis Iran and the challenges that it poses to us, to the region, to international stability; and then General Tom McInerney will follow with some thoughts about what we can do about it and what are the options that we may have to deal with things.

First of all, I think I would like to talk about Iran’s nuclear weapons program. Of course, that’s probably front and center in terms of the concerns that we have with this regime, although obviously support for terrorism and also its own horrific human rights abuse record at home are also concerns. But as far as the nuclear weapons program goes, the first thing that we need to talk about is the continuing belief on the part of the United States’ leadership and other Western security leaderships that negotiations can get us somewhere.

We are now headed into, this month, the third round this year of talks between Western powers, the United Nations, IAEA and Iran. There were talks in April. There were talks in May. There will soon be talks in June. They met in Istanbul, in Baghdad, and shortly will be in Moscow to talk again.

My contention is that these talks do nothing except give Iran exactly what it needs most, and that is more time, more time to complete its nuclear weapons program and to achieve a level where that program is deliverable; not just warheads, not just the missiles which obviously they already have, but rather that these things can be married up and delivered to a target. What we are looking at, even in terms of the IAEA reporting, which I will have to say under the leadership of the secretary-general, Yuki Amano, has become much more frank, I think, and candid than reporting under his predecessor. And so we began to see even last year, late in the year, November 2011 with that report out of the IAEA and subsequent reporting since then in this year 2012, that the IAEA is absolutely nailing Iran’s nuclear weapons program.

They are talking about such things as warhead development. They are talking about the testing of nuclear triggers or initiators that set off the explosive sequence. They are talking about foreign involvement in Iran’s nuclear weapons program.

Let me mention very quickly here one highlight that I think is very important in terms of what the IAEA has uncovered and also reported on. And that is the military nuclear facility at Parchin. I think what we are seeing at Parchin is a repeat. In other words, we’ve seen this movie before and we know how it ends.
Parchin is a military weapons site near Tehran. It is a place where the Iranians have been working on nuclear warhead development and probably those triggers, the testing of those triggers. Specifically, there is overhead satellite imagery that shows a particular type of a building and a container that the IAEA believes is or has been used for the testing of explosives; the explosives, again, that would set off the charge of a nuclear warhead.

Now what is the repeat part of this movie? Well, if you all might recall, back in about 2002, August to be specific, the Iranian opposition group, the Mujahadeen-e-Khalq and their parent political organization, the National Council of Resistance of Iran, simultaneously made an announcement both in Washington, D.C. and also in Paris, about Iran’s nuclear weapons program. And at that time, that publicly – for the first time – publicly blew the lid off of that program. Whatever had been known previously to intelligence services was classified, and we don’t know what that was, but publicly this was the first time that the extent of that program was made public.

And they talked about Natanz. They talked about Isfahan. These are sites now that have become very familiar to all of us who follow these issues: Natanz being the place where the enrichment is talking place; and Isfahan, conversion; Arak, the plutonium route light water reactor facility; Khalis electric plant and so forth. And on and on, more revelations emerged from that point forward and continue to do so to this day.

Well one of the sites that eventually was announced and uncovered and made public to the world in that series of revelations was about a place called Lavisan Shian. Lavisan Shian was a nuclear weapons facility for research, development and testing near Tehran. And after the revelations about its existence, the national security council of Iran that includes the supreme leader, all the commanders of the IRGC, the Quds force and so on, ministries of intelligence and all that, got together, went to panic stations essentially and said what do we do about these revelations?

Well, what they decided to do in the specific case of the site at Lavisan Shian was to erase it, raze it to the ground. And what they did is they took down every single building at the site. They pulled out every tree, bush, blade of grass and scrapped the earth down to a depth of I don’t know what centimeters, carted that away and gave the property over to the municipality of Tehran, which then turned it into a city park: picnic benches, basketball courts and so forth, which is what it is today.

Well, we are seeing the same thing happen again right now in front of our eyes at Parchin. Parchin also has been observed – satellite photography and other means – to have lines of trucks lined up behind the back door carting things out. And most recently, some of that satellite imagery has depicted at least two and perhaps three buildings at the site, at the Parchin military nuclear weapons development site, that have been erased. At least two and maybe three buildings gone, taken down. This is before the IAEA could get in there.

The IAEA has made multiple requests to visit this site. They have not been permitted to do so, and still have not been allowed in there to look at particularly this containment vessel or the building that it was in. So we are looking at, as I said, a repeat of a movie we’ve already seen. We know how this ends. And every single iteration of more talks gives Iran more time to finish at Parchin and the
development of things that the IAEA is now frankly telling us amounts to nothing less than a military nuclear weapons program.

Very quickly, I don’t want to take — I want to make sure we allow enough time for questions as well, but I want to talk about Iran’s role in the region and beyond. We talked about its support for terrorism. Let us talk a little bit about what is going on inside of Syria.

The regime of Bashar al-Assad is clearly on the ropes. It is not falling, yet. There are talks about having more talks about having more talks going on with regard to what to do about Syria. But in the meantime, Iran has pulled out all the stops to provide assistance to the regime of Bashar al-Assad to make sure that he does not fall.

They have sent IRGC and Quds force and also ministry of intelligence and security, their security service operatives, to Damascus to help Assad remain in power. Those efforts so far have helped him to stay in power. The massacres that are ongoing in various cities of Homs and other places, Homs, notwithstanding, the support of Iran for Bashar al-Assad has not diminished even slightly. The most recent suggestions that perhaps the United States ought to bring in other players of the region, for instance Iran as well as Russia from further out to assist in what they are calling an orderly transition, or maybe not orderly but at least a transition which sees Assad leave the scene, I cannot expect that those talks are going anywhere; and in particular because Iran is providing such strong material support to the regime.

Also it is a supporter, obviously, of Hezbollah. Hezbollah’s stronghold in Lebanon — Hezbollah essentially controls Lebanon, both politically and militarily today. As we’re seeing however, the chaos and what is more to come, additional chaos to be expected from Syria as the regime does go down, is spilling over the borders already into Lebanon. Lebanon has been described as a tinderbox. The border areas with Syria already have seen clashes both ways.

The other concern here is that as Assad and the regime feel control slipping away, that some of their WMD, in particular chemical and biological stockpiles, will be transferred or may already have been transferred to Hezbollah. Syria, by the way, has the absolutely largest stockpile of chemical weapons in the Middle East. These include nerve gas like Sarin.

They include the most highly advanced fourth generation VX and other kinds of nerve gases in enormous quantities; and as well, the missile and the munitions delivery systems with which to send them to their targets. These are the things that people are afraid Syria will be transferring, is transferring, to Hezbollah. Hezbollah, of course, is the primary terror proxy of Iran.

Biological weapons I might mention quickly too. Syria has one of the most sophisticated, advanced biological weapons programs in the Middle East, assisted in a great deal by Iran itself. It has weaponized anthrax, smallpox and plague, among other things.

These are not huge stockpiles. We’re not talking about the size that the Soviet Union used to keep, but they have very advanced methods. These are genetically modified.
Some of them are laboratory created synthetic creations of biological weapons, meaning that there are no easy antidotes or vaccines because we don’t know what the synthetic sequence is of these weaponized pathogens. Those things, they are afraid, are going to be transferred to Hezbollah. Or, even as the regime collapses in on itself, the chaos allows these things to fall into hands, such as Hezbollah’s or al-Qaeda, which as we know is a close working terror ally of both Hezbollah and of Iran, the government in Iran.

Finally, let me mention very quickly, as we move towards the idea of what can we do and what can be done about Iran, let me mention the Western Hemisphere, bring it back closer to home here. Iran has been developing across the Western Hemisphere a seriously expanded presence. That presence is diplomatic, it is commercial, it is military, it is intelligence.

Since about five to six years ago, Iran has increased the number of its diplomatic facilities, representations, be they embassies or consulates, across Latin America, from about five or six to 11. It now has also constructed about 17 new Islamic cultural centers. Every single one of these places that Iran is developing -- as well as all of its commercial enterprises in particular in places like Venezuela but also Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua -- every one of these places contains cover slots for its operatives: the operatives of the Quds force, of the IRGC and its intelligence operatives from the MOIS.

What are their jobs? Their jobs are to liaise, to make contact and to work with local what? Hezbollah cells, local narcotics trafficking cells, local organized crime: the madas (ph), the gangs. Much of this is now being aimed towards the narcotics trade coming out of Colombia.

Iran, in its alliance with the Hugo Chavez regime of Venezuela, is very deeply involved in the narcotics trade coming out of Colombia. It’s cocaine, primarily, but it is also other things like marijuana and also opium. So the presence of Iran and the burgeoning presence, the expanding presence across Latin America I think is extremely troubling.

In particular as we look at the possibility that the international community, or more likely perhaps Israel, would take steps at some point – must take steps for existential reasons to defend itself -- anticipatory self-defense is absolutely sanctioned under international law. If it does that, Israel, or the United States somehow is dragged in, which more than likely it would be, would that constitute a trigger for a response from Iran aimed back at obviously Israel, probably Jews in every place they can reach them, and the United States? Well, that’s what that presence of Iran in the Western Hemisphere is meant to provide them, with options for whatever course of action they may take.

Would a trigger, if that’s like an Israeli strike on Iran, cause the supreme leader to give the order to Hezbollah, for instance, and its cells located across Latin America – Central and North America too, us, the Canadians. Hezbollah is here. Would that trigger event cause the supreme leader to give that order? Well if it does, they are well placed in commercial enterprises and, and as I said, in all of these diplomatic facilities and Islamic centers.

There is proselytizing going on. There are terror training camps set up across certainly Venezuela and other places in Latin America. And perhaps, let me end on this one, most worrisome to me at least,
is the construction by the Iranian IRG construction brigades of missile bases in Venezuela. Those missile bases are located, for instance, on the Paraguana Peninsula, which is sort of the northern-most point of Venezuela heading on a straight trajectory line up to Miami.

It’s 1,500 miles from the Paraguana Peninsula to Miami. That is about 2,000 kilometers distance, and that’s just about the range of the Shahab missiles that Iran already has tested. There are Shahabs in Venezuela. There are other missiles – Iranian missiles already in Venezuela, and those bases and missile silos are being built right now as we speak.

Alright, let me stop there and turn it over to General McInerney.

(Applause).

GEN. THOMAS MCINERNEY: Clare, before you go, I just want to make a presentation of two books personally signed by Ray Tanter and myself on President Obama and Iran and... (terror tagging ?) from an Iranian dissident organization. You could have written both.

(Applause).

MR. LOPEZ: Thank you very much.

GEN. MCINERNEY: Michelle Bachman, thank you very much for being here, and others. It’s really indeed a pleasure, and you can understand now why I wanted Clare to go first, because we have really run out of time, I believe, with all the talking.

We have had three administrations: the Clinton administration, the Bush administration, and now the Obama administration who basically have talked. And if you look around and see where it has gotten us, it hasn’t gotten us very much.

The U.S. is at a critical period and we must realize that Iran has no intention of negotiating away their development of nuclear weapons. The P-5 Plus 1 talks are part of a strategy of deception, defiance and concealment. The Baghdad talks did not produce anything. They were a dismal failure. Iran is now sending signals that they may not have the Moscow talks in two weeks, which puts the administration in a panic. Oh, they won’t talk. It sends the signals that we ought to be accepting.

The Mujahadeen-e-Khalq, who Clare mentioned, who first notified us 10 years ago and the West of the uranium enrichment at Natanz, now they are being thrown under the bus by the Obama administration. The Clinton and Bush administrations also threw them under the bus. It is criminal what has been done there and how we have treated these people that have been such valuable allies to us.

Now it is important that we seriously look at the military options that we have to examine and may have to implement. The Israeli’s only option can delay nuclear development two to three years. They do not have the punch to do a great job, but it will be adequate.

However, they have been bought off by Stuxnet and Flame, as you all now know in the public scene. That’s what has held them back, because of these covert means. There have been other covert
means that the United States’ government has worked with them, apparently; and that is what has, as I’ve said, held them off.

I don’t think this is the best option. The Israelis can do a delay, but only in the nuclear. I want to give you a U.S. option which I think we are being driven to, and with greater implications.

The U.S. only option, with the support of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Jordan, Oman and others – others I’m talking maybe some NATO – but frankly they do not have much to offer. They offer political cover. The other Mideast nations, offer us facilities, that’s critical.

The force structure, I think, that would be required to do this – I’m going to go into some detail, so make sure our Russian colleague gets it all down – will require three carrier battle groups plus three to five subs. Now we already have two carrier battle groups over there. That’s very important.

The U.S. Air Force assets will require at least three tactical fighter wings, which have 210 fighter aircraft: F-22s, F-15s and F-16s. We already have F-22s in theater. I commend the Obama administration for making that move. We’ll need 48 to 60 tankers: KC-135s and KC-10s; 12 AWACs; six Joint Stars; six Global Hawks and 30 Reapers. Most of those assets are in theater now, not 12 AWACs or six Joint Stars, but close.

We need 16 B-1s, 16 B-52s and 15 B-2s. Now the B-2s we need 20 massive ordinance penetrators. That’s the 30,000 pound bomb. That will do it.

That will penetrate, for instance, at Fardow, which has a 200 foot over-cover. It’s in a mountain. Two of them in the same hole, which they can do, will penetrate Fardow. And Fardow, of course, is this zone of immunity that Minister of Defense Barack talks about that once they get that 20 percent enrichment into Fardow, then there’s nothing the Israelis can do to prevent them generating a weapon.

And let me briefly digress for a second. Everybody looks and the analysts come out and tell you about how long it will take them to missionize and put a nuclear weapon on a Shahab III. The weapons that we have to worry about in U.S. cities, Israeli cities, Western Europe, come in a Ryder truck and the weapon is about as big as a Coke vending machine, like the one I saw down at Eglin when I went through their IED training area. I came out of the hot summer in August and wanted a coke, and Captain Greene said – I said, can I get a coke and I pulled out a buck. He said, no, just pull the door open. I pulled the door open and there was a nuclear weapon in there. It does not have to be missionized. And, of course, that Coke vending machine was lead-lined, so it will come in. And that’s our threat.

Now let me get back on point. The target -- in addition to those forces that I mentioned to you, the B-1, B-52s, F-15s, will all carry 2,000 or 5,000 pound bunker penetrating weapons. The target list – and let me just digress one second.

We will use covert forces. That’s all I want to say. But it’s not boots on the ground. But it will be covert forces.
The target list: they’re the 20-plus nuclear sites that we must neutralize. The integrated air defense for fighters and SAMs, I’m not really worried about the fighters with the F-22, but I am concerned about the SAMs. There are 13 air bases, eight of them are the important ones that have the fighter interceptors. The others have got C-130s and that type of thing.

The IRGC navy, air force and army. Now why I point this out is we must destroy as much as we can, or neutralize, the IRGC forces, the IRBM sites that Clare mentioned, the Shahab IIs, IIIs and Ills, and the Silkworm sites along the coast and mine-laying ships. The mine-laying ships must be a very early target, initial target. It’s important that they do not get out of the port. We can do that. The navy, particularly, can handle that problem.

What it will require will be 450 strike sorties per day, 120 air superiority sorties per day, 30 to 60 cruise missiles for the first seven days. And that’s the lay-down that we have to put in. It’ll require three to five weeks to accomplish this.

Now specifically those objectives: destroy or neutralize those nuclear sites that I mentioned; destroy or neutralize the naval forces, mines, the small boats and their subs; destroy or neutralize the integrated air defense; same with the IRBM and the IRGC and the Quds force; also their intelligence forces. We must neutralize and destroy them as much as possible.

Now this sets the stage for regime change, and that’s what I mean by why it’s important that we have the right punch. It is more than just the nuclear sites. It is shaping an environment to let the Iranian people take their country back.

And the Iranian people want their country back, but they need to see the Western resolve. Unfortunately, I do not believe the Obama administration will execute this campaign unless they get way behind in the run-up to the election. It will cause a major recession, but it may achieve his goal of being re-elected.

As you see in the polls, he is looking very strong in the national security area. He is not looking good in the area that’s most important, on the economy. And so do not be surprised that if he were to all of a sudden be a very aggressive commander in chief. It would not surprise me, if he thought it could help him get re-elected.

As Congressman Bachmann and I were talking about, he’s released everything, or virtually everything, on our most delicate secrets. And I’ve never seen this in my 55 years as a cadet at West Point, 35 years in the Air Force, and now, where any administration has released information so sensitive to the national security of the United States. It is very dangerous, and in fact I believe it is criminal.

In conclusion, we’re at a very critical stage with Iran. Nuclear developments that will impact on U.S. cities with those weapons will end up in Israeli and European cities as well through proxies, i.e. al-Qaeda/Hezbollah. Clare laid out that very well. We cannot take this chance. The Iranians know this administration is weak so they’re going for broke now.
Thanks very much and I throw it open to questions for both Clare and I.

(Applause).

MR. : I’d be interested in what Clare can provide on this, what do we know about the Syrian opposition and are there any elements of the Syrian opposition that we can trust?

MS. LOPEZ: From what I can tell of the Syrian opposition, it is by design dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood. The United States, working together with its close ally, Erdogan of Turkey, has helped to shape and to form the Syrian National Council, that’s the political opposition group, the Syrian Free Army as well. These groups are dominated by Muslim Brothers.

And here I think is part of the danger. It’s not just the Muslim Brotherhood. You have jihadis-are-us flooding into the country now from all directions. There’s a reverse flow out of Iraq, for instance, whereas previously during the 2000s the flow was going the other way from Syria across this border to Iraq. Now, it’s coming back.

The problem -- Walid Phares, I’m sure you all know the brilliant scholar and writer -- has laid out in his series of books. He wrote a trilogy after 2001, the third one of which is called “The Coming Revolution.” It was published in 2010.

And in that book he absolutely lambasts the United States and other Western powers for failing to reach out, nourish and develop the capabilities of genuinely pro-democracy groups, minorities, ethnic religious minorities in the Middle East. In Syria you’re talking about a patchwork of those minorities. You’re talking about Druids. You’re talking about Kurds.

There are Christians. There are the Alawites who hold the power. There are Sunnis. There are Shias.

And what is shaping up now -- I think what very likely could happen is that this whole thing implodes and collapses and there is a civil war as each of these competing ethnic groups goes after each other. We did not nourish and develop over the decades as we should have; or reached out not just in Syria but across the Middle East, across North Africa: the Berbers, the Khabili people of Algeria, the Copts of Egypt, to nourish their aspirations, their just and proper aspirations for genuine democracy, not just the mechanisms of elections. But briefly, it’s the Muslim Brotherhood.

MR. PETER PRY: Peter Pry, Task Force on National and Homeland Security. My concern here is, how do you know that Iran doesn’t already have the bomb? It’s not hard to miniaturize one of these things. The Pakistanis did it in a year and put it on a missile. How do we know they don’t have one sitting on a Scud on a freighter down in Venezuela already? And their activities are designed to provoke us into attacking them to justify a catastrophic nuclear EMP attack on the United States? You could end up bringing on the very crisis you’re seeking to avoid.

GEN. MCINERNEY: Well let’s take it further, Peter, because it’s a very good question. They may have. Now if they do, do we think that they’re just going to keep it as a deterrent weapon that we don’t
know about? So the question is, is when do they use it? And if we take the option where we make the strike, then we have certain things on our behalf, that we understand what’s going on globally, how we shape it.

What I don’t want to see, and what we don’t want to see, is all of a sudden one day five nuclear weapons go off in the United States and no finger prints. And we say, well how did this happen? So the fact is, they may very well have weapons. But if we’re worried about taking action to do something because they may retaliate, that’s a false premise. They’re going to do it when they want to do it. Why don’t we force them into making that move?

And I would have loved to have taken this regime down covertly when we had time. Unfortunately, I believe we’re out of time and we’re at a very critical juncture. That’s the only reason why I think that we have to consider the military option and getting involved. But there’s risk in this all the time. But I assure you, if we don’t do it within a year, they are going to have those weapons and those weapons will end up in U.S. cities.

MR. PRY: And can we run the risk of [leaving ?] these in Venezuela out of your operation?

GEN. MCINERNEY: Frankly, no. Frankly, no.

MR. RAY TANTER: Ray Tanter. Thank you, General and Clare, for your tour d’ horizon. And General, would it be wise to take the opposition group that Michelle Bachmann actually talked about when she was running, off the U.S. foreign terrorists organizations list in order to at least begin the regime change clock – sending a strong signal to Tehran?

GEN. MCINERNEY: Absolutely, Ray. We should do that today. We should send the signal to Tehran that we’re not going to use them for trade bait anymore. They’re off the terrorist list. That’s all we have to do is take them off the terrorist list, and we send the signal that we mean business. Unfortunately, three administrations have sent the wrong signal.

MR. TANTER: And Clare Lopez, one quick question. You talked about Lavisan Shian, and I liked your comparison of Lavisan Shian with Parchin. But you didn’t say anything about Lavisan Shian II, where the equipment was moved from Lavisan Shian underground to Lavisan Shian II. And that is the comparison to Parchin because Parchin is underground.

MS. LOPEZ: Well exactly. The danger is that as more and more of Iran’s nuclear weapons program, formerly clandestine, no more so, has been revealed, they have increasingly taken more and more measures to bury it, hide it, stick it inside of mountains and tunnels and bunkers underground. And this is what General McInerney was talking about when he talked about the window of immunity which is a phrase coined by Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barack; meaning that once they get all of this into those protected places, we don’t know what’s going on under there. Not only can we not reach them, we may not even – we probably do not even know where they all are even now. Which, I think, gets back to the question of it’s not about destroying all the nuclear weapons sites, it’s about changing the regime.
I mean after all, if let’s say Sweden went nuclear tomorrow we’d say, oh no, another failure of the NonProliferation Treaty. How horrible. But, it’s Sweden, right? But because of this regime, we say no, they cannot be allowed to have these most dangerous weapons.

MR. WILL CURTIS: I’m Dr. Will Curtis from the U.S. Naval Academy. I have a question for the General on his suggestion about using military force. One is that, when you were speaking about Syria and Iran, what kept coming back to my mind was a statement attributed to Will Rogers. Diplomacy is the art of saying nice doggie until we can get a rock. And I think that’s being played out here.

My question to you, General, is in your plans here how much time does it require to gather these forces, get them into the region? And doesn’t that send a signal as we get those resources into the region that may prompt some type of response on their part? It seems to me that we’re front loading it, but what’s going to be the reaction on the opposite side?

GEN. MCINERNEY: Well that’s a very good question. And I’m not sure that – I’d probably say we’re not going to make this a covert strike. There will be some lead-up.

But we could in a week – the long pole in the tent is, of course, the third carrier. And on a swap-out – that’s a certain time – a swap-out of other units. We swap-out AWACs and different things. There are opportunities to do that.

Much of the force, the Global Hawks and those assets, the Reapers, our reconnaissance, they’re partially – most of them are in the theater, Sigonella or in the UAE, other bases. So they’re there. But it will send a signal that people will get an inclination. But I believe there will be other diplomatic issues that will send that signal sooner.

Look, I never wanted to do this. I’ve talked about this. But I’ve always felt that we must take this regime down covertly. They are the problem in the whole region.

And we’ve had three administrations, or actually we can go all the way back to Carter that let it happen, who have let this happen. And so now we’re heading towards a crisis. It’s much like World War II. Is this 1939 again?

And what my objective is, is clearly those weapons will end up in U.S. cities. If you don’t believe that, then go along your way. But I didn’t believe people would fly airplanes into the World Trade Center. Shame on me. No more. The signals are clear. Their writings are clear.

Yes, ma’am?

MS. SAMEERA DANIELS: Sameera Daniels. From a logistical point of view, and from the catastrophic point of view, in the event that the United States or Israel, you know, bombs the sites, there’s some contradictory assumptions going on here, which is that in the case of Iraq it was at a certain point they had to do – they had a, you know, it hadn’t gotten to the nuclear weapon. But if indeed Iran has nuclear weapons now, the aftermath of that is a very different – I mean, if you bomb
what happens to the material? You’re looking at nuclear explosions. And I just don’t know how we can take that kind of risk because it’s going to –

GEN. MCINERNEY: Look, I know where you’re going. The fact is, can you take the risk of nuclear weapons, nuclear terrorism, five to 10 weapons going off in the United States?

MS. DANIELS: Israel, other countries as well, in other words –

GEN. MCINERNEY: Look, this is not easy.

MS. DANIELS: Right.

GEN. MCINERNEY: This is very difficult stuff. None of us want this to happen. But none of us wanted 9/11 to happen. So we live in a world that is, as Ahmadinejad said on the 2th of November of 2005, “soon there’ll be a world without the Zionists and the United States.” Your book, Ali Reza. The fact is, it’s very clear what their objectives are.

Tony?

MR.: Tom, I don’t know if you can answer this question – (off mic) – to the point of the NIE recently talked about the Iranians now developing – (off mic). Is there any hope of having an intelligence assessment done that honestly integrates everything you’ve talked about? This is not new information. And Clare you and I have talked about this. And I’ve worked on the North Korean issue. We watched that in slow motion under the Clinton White House where the North Korean got away with this. With Clapper in charge, is there any hope at all of the intelligence community doing its job and actually provide intelligence regarding what is really going on?

MS. LOPEZ: Let’s just say that indications to date are not positive for that. I think a very important part of it that we haven’t addressed here right yet is this is a regime that is driven by a particular ideology. This is something that our national security leadership refuses to talk about, to acknowledge or to confront. That ideology is the ideology of jihad and sharia.

In the Iranian constitution itself, it dedicates the country to spreading its revolution worldwide. It names the IRGC as the religious army, the ideological army of the regime with a mission to spread jihad universally. And it quotes a verse from the Koran, you may know this one, it’s verse 860. And it says, “make ready your forces to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to spread terror to the hearts of the enemy.” That’s in the Iranian constitution.

This is something that our leadership will not talk about and will not confront. Moreover, quite to the contrary, what is going on right now is a government-wide purge of all training and instructional materials in the executive departments; meaning department of State, department of Homeland Security, of Justice and most recently in the Pentagon.

REP. MICHELLE BACHMANN: And FBI.
MS. LOPEZ: And the FBI, certainly under the department of Justice – a purge of all training and instructional materials that actually identifies jihad as terrorism, as Islamic terrorism that is animated and inspired by the doctrine, the laws and scriptures of Islam. Until our national leadership reverses that course and is able to acknowledge that that is an ideology driving the Iranian regime as well as its co-jihadis in al-Qaeda, etcetera, we will not get the frank NIE or intelligence estimate that you’re hoping for, we’re all hoping for.

GEN. MCINERNEY: Last question.

MR. DAN POLLACK: Dan Pollack from the Zionist Organization of America. When we watch the experts on TV, especially, what we hear is of course it would be very difficult to really stop their nuclear program. After all, these people have the knowledge that they’ve acquired about how to do these things. Now of course these people are elevating Iran into almost a superpower status in terms of their military. Can you just talk about the ability of the United States military? It sounds like you very much believe in it, General, that we can actually stop the nuclear program by a program of prolonged strikes. Is there any doubt in your mind that at the end of that, the nuclear program of Iran will in fact be stopped?

GEN. MCINERNEY: Well look, I talked about the overt things. There are covert things. Fifty-one percent of the Iranians are Persians. Twenty-four percent are Azaris. Ten percent are Kurds, and the rest are cats and dogs.

It is an environment that is ripe for the people to want to take their country back. And so when I talk about the overt things we have to do, below the surface is the covert things that we have to do to help the Iranian people. Because remember, part of this strike is only against the military.

You have an operation, information campaign, that is telling the people this is not against you. This is against the mullahs and the situation that they have brought to you. Take your country back.

We had that opportunity, as you remember, right after President Obama came in, in the Green Revolution. We missed that opportunity. So it is there. It’s latent. And I think that’s what we have to consider.

And again, Clare?

MS. LOPEZ: Just one last note, really quickly. I know what you’re getting at in terms of the cat’s out of the bag, you can’t put the toothpaste back in the tube. But there are examples of countries which formerly had begun a nuclear weapons development program: Brazil, Argentina, South Africa, and for one reason or another gave it up. And those regimes, those countries, the leadership of those countries now are not considered a threat. Now the knowledge itself, yes, is out there.

And how do you get that back? You can never get it back. It’s fungible. It crosses borders and all of that. But the danger really is, I think, in this regime that is dedicated to jihad and to enmity against the United States, Israel and the West. And remember when you think about it, it doesn’t even need a huge program. It needs basically one nuclear weapon. One weapon exploded over, let’s say Kansas in
the atmosphere as an EMP, a super EMP for instance, which we know they’re working on, sends us all back to “Little House on the Prairie” days overnight, minus the barn and the cows and the fields. We don’t have that. This is what we’re facing because of the regime, not just the knowledge itself.

GEN. MCINERNEY: Let me just thank Congressman Bachmann for being here, and all the rest of you. We’re very, very appreciative of it.

MS. : I’m just going to step in a moment here for Peter. Thank you all for coming and please join me in thanking our speakers once again.

(Applause).

As Peter mentioned, there’s a change in schedule for one of next week’s breakfasts. Sarah has a copy of the schedule outside. And if you are coming to another breakfast please make sure that you re-confirm with her.

Thank you, again.