

SYRIA: U.S. POLICY DIRECTIONS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS UNITED STATES SENATE

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SYRIA: U.S. POLICY DIRECTIONS

Thursday, October 30, 2003

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:14 a.m. in Room SH-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Hon. Richard G. Lugar [chairman] presiding.

Present: Senators Lugar [presiding], Chafee, Coleman, and Biden.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD G. LUGAR, U.S. SENATOR FROM INDIANA

The CHAIRMAN. This hearing of the Foreign Relations Committee is called to order. Today we are delighted to welcome Ambassador William Burns, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, and Ambassador Cofer Black, the Counterterrorism Coordinator, for a timely review of United States foreign policy towards Syria.

We also welcome our distinguished second panel: Dr. Patrick Clawson of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy; Ambassador Richard Murphy of the Council on Foreign Relations; Dr. Murhaf Jouejati of the Middle East Institute; and Dr. Flynt Leverett of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution.

Hopes that reform could take root in Syria after the fall of Saddam Hussein have dimmed in the past few months. Instead, tensions have increased between the United States and Syria, and a cycle of retaliation and revenge has overtaken and derailed possible progress in the Road Map to Peace for the Israelis and the Palestinians. The Israeli retaliatory attack on an Islamic Jihad terrorist camp in Syria underscored that the “no war and no peace” status quo in the region cannot be taken for granted.

Many experts thought that when President Bashar Al-Asad replaced his father 3 years ago he would adopt a more pragmatic approach to negotiations with Israel and to internal political and economic reforms. Syrian cooperation with the United States in relation to al-Qaeda terrorists held promise for cooperation in other areas. Secretary Burns noted last June in his testimony that “the cooperation the Syrians have provided in their own self-interest on al-Qaeda has saved American lives.”

But Syria’s failure to stop terrorist groups, including Hizballah, Hamas, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, from using Syria as a base for training and planning suicide bombings in Israel has con-

tinued. Syria also has failed to withdraw its forces from Lebanon or open a dialogue for peace. It reportedly has continued to maintain stockpiles of chemical weapons and to pursue development of lethal biological agents. Moreover, Syria is working against coalition forces in Iraq by refusing to release nearly \$3 billion in assets stolen from the Iraqi people.

The Senate's discussions of the Syria Accountability Act have been based on the presumption that the most effective response to Syrian behavior is expanding sanctions against that country. This is a natural conclusion, but Syria's presence on the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism already brings with it a number of sanctions and restrictions. More importantly, as we give the administration additional sticks to use against Syria, we should be careful about restricting our government's flexibility in responding to diplomatic opportunities that might present themselves.

Syria has shown some ability to make better choices: for example, supporting UN Security Council Resolution 1441 following Secretary Powell's presentation in February and voting for the more recent Resolution 1511, which calls upon all nations to support the U.S.-led effort in Iraq.

Even as we tighten restrictions on Syria, we should be emphasizing to the Syrians why it is in their best interest to recalculate their approach toward the United States. Syria shares a 400-mile border with Iraq. With more than 135,000 United States troops deployed in Iraq, Syria needs to reconsider where its future security interests lie.

This is not a threat of U.S. military action, but a statement of the new reality on Syria's borders. Moreover, Syrian forces that continue to occupy Lebanon are draining the already stagnant Syrian economy while providing few positive returns. Continued Syrian occupation of Lebanon only invites further possible military action from Israel.

The Syrian leadership also must adjust to the end of its under-the-counter oil deals with Saddam Hussein. Syria must negotiate new and transparent arrangements to meet energy needs. Syria's moribund economy will not survive without opening up to investment and trade, particularly with Iraq. Significant benefits to Syria could accrue from an economically vibrant Iraqi trading partner, increased trade with Europe and the United States and even possible membership in a Middle East Free Trade Agreement.

In this context, Syria may find motivation to return to the negotiating table. A deal on the Golan Heights that would provide security guarantees for Israel while respecting Syria's sovereignty could be a key to resolving a host of other problems, including Syria's occupation of Lebanon, its support of Palestinian terror groups, and its economic and political isolation.

Although success of such an agreement would depend ultimately on the parties themselves, I would be interested to hear from our witnesses what the United States can and should do to promote a viable settlement. We look forward to our witnesses' recommendations on the other issues and hope that the discussion will lead to help inform our policy towards Syria.

I would like to call now upon the distinguished ranking member of our committee, Senator Biden, for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR.,
U.S. SENATOR FROM DELAWARE**

Senator BIDEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I am delighted with our first panel from the State Department. I have very high regard for both gentlemen, as well as our second panel, which I am anxious to hear.

I suggest we basically have three options with regard to our policy toward Syria right now. But I think there is a reality that we should all just sort of face up to. That is, I for one think that Syrian conduct relative to its neighbors, to support for terror, to opening up its economy, and every other aspect that we are going to examine about Syria's present government and Syria's present activity, as well as the bilateral relationship with the United States, in my view depends almost wholly upon our success or failure in Iraq.

If in fact we are successful and stay the course in securing the peace and a stable government in Iraq, I think it will have a transforming impact upon Syrian conduct. Quite frankly, if we—if any of the scenarios that are discussed that relate to failure, either pulling out prematurely or not being able to secure the peace and a transition to a government viewed as legitimate—that is, essentially a representative republic—then I think it is Katy bar the door.

I think we will reap the whirlwind, not, quite frankly, just in Syria, but in the entire region. I think it will be the end of modernity, any notions of it in the Arab world. I think it will temporarily bring to a halt any reasonable prospect of any notions of democratization, and it will end, I think for the foreseeable future, the prospects of nation states in the region cooperating in curtailing terrorist organizations, cabining their capability. It will have the exact opposite effect.

I quite frankly think Bashar Asad has two people looking over—two circumstances looking over his shoulder: his father's old cabinet. When I sat with him, and I think we were together, Dick—I cannot recall, to be honest with you now, I have made so many trips lately—in his office for an hour and a half, it was interesting to watch. In our business, after doing this for 3 decades, part of what the plain old politician part of us hopefully brings to the table is we are not all that bad at assessing what the other guy is thinking or what the other guy's motives are or what the other guy needs in the deal.

I sat there and I looked at a guy who looked to me very conflicted. On the one hand he was modern enough to understand there had to be significant change in his country. On the other hand, every time he would even squint in that direction there would be a foreign minister or someone else sitting there glaring, literally, at him. I mean that in the literal sense.

So that is one. Assuming Asad is attempting to moderate or ameliorate his relationships in the region, he has that one problem. The second problem he has is he is sitting atop a part of the world, in a part of the world, he just has no idea which way it is going to go right now. The honest to God truth is—and everyone with whom I speak in the world—and I told this bad joke; I might as well tell it again because it sort of is a homely way of explaining it.

There used to be a joke about the coach who had a center fielder who in four innings made seven errors. And he pulls George out and he puts in Joe or John. The first play after he puts in John is a routine pop fly to center field and John drops the ball. The coach goes crazy. He calls time out and calls John in, says: What the devil is the matter with you, John? John looks at the coach and says: Coach, George screwed up center field so badly no one can play it.

Well, the truth of the matter is the rest of the world is looking right now. It is a bit of humor. Sometimes you need a little bit of humor to leaven how deadly serious this is. But I still think it is fully within our grasp to secure the peace in Iraq, but it is going to require some significant further change in policy to do so in my view.

I think the rest of the world is standing around looking now: Do I want to play in center field? I am not at all sure. I am not at all sure friend or foes have reached a conclusion as to what the outcome is going to be. But when they reach that conclusion I think it is going to impact upon and inform their judgments on every other aspect of their relationship with us in the region.

So we will talk about the Syria Accountability Act. We will talk about a number of other things here. But I just want to be clear, which I have been earlier with both the State Department personnel here, that I am going to ask their view at some point about how connected they think the possibilities are with regard to Syria and success or failure in Iraq.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I thank you and I yield.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you very much, Senator Biden.

Gentlemen, before I ask for your testimony I need to announce that we are going to have a roll call vote in about 3 minutes. So it is the intent of the chair to recess the hearing so that members who are here can vote. Some of our colleagues, we presume, are proceeding to the floor to vote and will be returning. In this way, your testimony will not be conflicted with people coming and going. We will be back because we look forward to hearing from you.

Now, let me just say at the outset that your statement and that of our following panel will be placed in the record in full. Be prepared to present as you wish your material in some summary form that would expedite the questions of the committee.

We are likely to have another roll call vote, I am advised, at 12:30. So hopefully between these two roll call votes we will have an excellent hearing. If we are not finished at that point, we will continue after that vote so that all members have an opportunity to ask their questions of the witnesses.

But for the moment, the hearing is recessed and we will be back very shortly.

Senator BIDEN. Thank you, gentlemen.

[Recess from 10:29 a.m. to 10:58 a.m.]

The CHAIRMAN. The hearing is called to order again. The vote was postponed again and again, as you may have surmised, but is taking place and members will be rejoining us.

Ambassador Burns, we welcome you. We appreciate your coming and look forward to your testimony. Would you please proceed.

STATEMENT OF HON. WILLIAM J. BURNS, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU FOR NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ambassador BURNS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am delighted to be here this morning and, with your permission, I will submit my prepared statement for the record and offer just a few brief summary comments.

The CHAIRMAN. It will be published in full.

Ambassador BURNS. Mr. Chairman, our relations with Syria today are poor. Six months ago, Secretary Powell outlined in clear and candid terms for President Asad serious American concerns about Syrian behavior in a number of areas. The Secretary made equally clear our continuing commitment to comprehensive peace in the Middle East, including on the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks. He stressed the new strategic possibilities in the region with the liberation of Iraq and urged Syria to reconsider its own interests and actions in light of those possibilities.

Unfortunately, Syria has failed to make the fundamental changes that Secretary Powell emphasized last May. It is true that Syria has taken some positive steps on Iraq in recent weeks. It voted for United Nations Security Council Resolution 1511, it is demonstrating cooperation on the issue of former Iraqi regime assets in Syrian banks, and it has improved control of its border with Iraq. While much more remains to be done, these recent steps are welcome. They are in Syria's interest as much as America's because Syria should have as big a stake as any country in a stable, unified Iraq.

In other areas, however, Syria's actions continue to pose profound problems. Nowhere is this clearer than in the case of terrorist groups harbored by Damascus. Groups such as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad continue to operate out of Syria, directing and supporting attacks on innocent civilians in Israel and the occupied territories. Such attacks are reprehensible, deeply destructive of legitimate Palestinian aspirations for statehood, and totally contradictory to Syria's professed commitment to comprehensive peace.

Syria simply cannot have it both ways. It cannot claim an interest in a political solution and the resumption of negotiations for the return of the Golan and at the same time shelter terrorists determined to do all they can to prevent such a political solution. And it certainly cannot have it both ways with the United States in the post-September 11th world.

It is true that Syria has offered valuable cooperation against al-Qaeda. That is in both our interests and we welcomed it. But that does not outweigh Syria's continued support for other terror groups. In concert with Iran, Syria supports Hizballah, an extremely dangerous terrorist organization with global reach and the ability to threaten coalition forces in Iraq. Beyond its support for terrorism, we continue to have serious concerns about Syria's continued presence in Lebanon and its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Chairman, we take no particular satisfaction in highlighting our continuing troubles with Syria. We ought to be able to work together to revive hope for Arab-Israeli peace, shape the emergence

of a stable Iraqi neighbor, fight violent extremists who threaten us all, and create a better economic future for Syria and its people. Dialogue and diplomacy between the United States and Syria have always been difficult and often frustrating. But in years past American administrations have sometimes found solid ground on which to build with Syria. I hope that our efforts at engagement can eventually produce that again in the future.

But in the mean time, we face some real problems in Syrian behavior that we cannot afford to ignore. Action on the Syria Accountability Act certainly makes clear the depth of Congressional concern on these issues and the consequences of inaction by Syria. The administration will continue to work hard in our direct contacts with Syria as well as in concert with our friends and allies in the international community and the region to drive home to the Syrian regime the need, in all our interests, for fundamental changes in behavior.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Burns follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WILLIAM J. BURNS

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, for the opportunity to speak about the U.S.-Syria relationship.

I think it might be useful to frame today's discussion of our relationship with Syria in the context of the four goals that drive our overall agenda in the Middle East. First, the emergence of an Iraq that is unified, stable, democratic, and prosperous. Second, the achievement of the President's vision of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security. Second, achievement of the President's vision of two states, Israel and Palestine, at peace and secure with each other and the region. Third, the elimination of the threat of terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. And fourth, support for homegrown efforts at economic and political reform as the best means to achieve lasting peace, and prosperity and democracy in the region.

It is through this policy prism that we must view Syria's actions and draw conclusions about the course of our relationship. Unfortunately, Syria's record with regard to these four foreign policy priorities is poor. In his visit to Damascus in May, the Secretary of State spoke candidly to Syrian President Bashar Al Asad about our concerns about Syrian behavior and identified the issues that the Syrian regime needed to address in order to develop a positive and productive relationship with the United States. Secretary Powell made clear that the United States remained committed to comprehensive peace in the region, including on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, and remained ready for an improved bilateral relationship. But he also explained that the Syrians needed to establish that they were prepared to play a constructive role in the search for regional peace before we could envision progress on these fronts. I reinforced the Secretary's message in Damascus in August.

We have been very direct with the Syrians about our concerns. The issues emphasized in the Syria Accountability Act have been reflected in our ongoing dialogue with Damascus for months now. While we have seen some positive steps with respect to Iraq, we remain deeply concerned on other critical areas—particularly terrorism and WMD.

Iraq

In the months leading up to Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Administration had two areas of particular concern with respect to Syria's relationship with the regime of Saddam Hussein: illicit oil trade and illicit transshipment of dual-use and military-related items into Iraq. Despite repeated warnings, the Asad regime allowed these actions to continue, even after the beginning of Coalition military action in Iraq. Fortunately for all concerned, decisive U.S. engagement in the early days of the conflict brought an end to these activities.

We have been clear: there is no issue of greater importance for the United States than the safety and security of U.S. and Coalition personnel in Iraq. To this end, during his May visit, the Secretary focused on the need for Syria to secure its bor-

ders with respect to both high-level figures of the former Iraqi regime who might seek safehaven in Syria, as well as those individuals who might seek to infiltrate Iraq from Syria to bring harm and instability. In addition, the Secretary noted the importance of securing former regime assets held in Syrian banks so that they might be returned to their rightful owners, the Iraqi people.

Though Syria has taken steps over the past several months to address these areas of concern, their efforts fall short of what is necessary. On the border, we have witnessed increased vigilance on the part of Syrian security forces. But the porous nature of the Syrian-Iraqi border and cross-border tribal ties mean that Syria continues to be a preferred route for those seeking to undermine Coalition efforts to establish stability and a peaceful transition to democracy in Iraq.

On the issue of former Iraqi regime assets, a joint U.S.-Iraqi forensic accounting team recently departed Damascus, where they worked closely with Syrian officials to obtain information related to the disposition of Iraqi assets in Syria. We continue to call on Syria, and nations around the world, to live up to their obligations under UNSCR 1483 and return these funds to the Iraqi people, where they belong.

We are pleased with Syria's recent vote in support of UNSCR 1511 and its decision to attend the Iraqi donors conference in Madrid. We hope this represents a new readiness by Syria to fully support the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq.

Israel/Palestinians

While the Syrian leadership publicly affirms its support for comprehensive peace in the Middle East and its desire to restart negotiations for the return of the Golan Heights, it continues to offer safehaven to Palestinian rejectionist groups whose terrorist actions undermine both progress toward President Bush's two-state vision and the aspirations of the Palestinian people. Damascus claims that the offices of HAMAS, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the PFLP-GC are purely informational in nature. Such claims are simply not credible. Individuals associated with these groups continue to engage in operational activities from their Damascus base. Syria's refusal to seriously address this issue and sever ties with these terrorist organizations delays the day when Syria's own territorial claims can be addressed via negotiations.

Syria maintains an unhelpful approach in the UN Security Council, where it has sponsored unbalanced resolutions related to Israel-Palestine conflict and refused to include language condemning terrorism.

Terrorism and WMD

Syria, in concert with Iran, also provides support—including safe haven and transit for personnel and materiel between Iran and Lebanon—to Lebanese Hizballah, another terrorist organization whose activities, particularly in South Lebanon, are a destabilizing factor in the region. Hizballah's global reach—and the threat it could pose to our forces in Iraq—makes it an organization of particular concern to the United States and our allies in the global war on terrorism.

With respect to Syrian cooperation against Al-Qaeda, this Administration has acknowledged that Syrian cooperation earlier in the war on terrorism was has been valuable and has saved American lives. This cooperation, however, is not sufficient to outweigh Damascus' continued support for other terror groups.

On weapons of mass destruction, Under Secretary Bolton noted in Congressional testimony earlier this fall our concern about Syria's nuclear R&D program and the need to watch for any activity or evidence of foreign assistance that could facilitate a Syrian nuclear-weapons capability. We are aware of Syrian efforts to acquire dual-use technologies that could be applied to a nuclear weapons program. Syria is a party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and has a standard fullscope safeguards agreement with the IAEA, but has not yet signed the IAEA Additional Protocol to its safeguards agreement. Syria has signed, but not ratified, the Biological Weapons Convention. Nevertheless, Syria is fully committed to expanding and improving its chemical and biological weapons programs, which it believes serve as a deterrent to regional adversaries. Damascus is pursuing both solid- and liquid-propellant missile programs and relies extensively on foreign assistance in these endeavors.

Reform

President Asad assumed power over three years ago in an atmosphere of optimism—a so-called "Damascus Spring." The fact that early expectations about the pace and degree of reform the new President would pursue may have been overly ambitious does not diminish the disappointment with the lack of progress to date. Efforts thus far—including the demilitarization of Syrian public schools by ending military-style school uniforms and mandatory military summer camp, a refocusing of the ruling Ba'ath Party's role in government, and creation of private univer-

sities—are mere “glimmers” and much remains to be done to address endemic corruption, infringement of fundamental human rights such as freedom of expression and association, and a lackluster commitment to meaningful economic reform.

In short, Mr. Chairman, while Syria has decided to work constructively with the United States in some areas, on balance, we remain very concerned that the government in Damascus continues to exert a negative influence on several of the critical foreign-policy priorities I outlined at the beginning of my remarks. In some instances, it seems that Syria harbors the illusion that cosmetic steps will be enough to defuse our concerns. In others, there seems to be a misplaced belief in Damascus that U.S. engagement in Iraq and with the Israelis and Palestinians will prevent us from pursuing a robust agenda with Syria. Both judgments are ill-considered and fail to grasp the depth of our concerns, and those of the international community.

Until Syria shows itself committed to comprehensive peace in the region through concrete actions, it will continue to find itself at odds with the United States and increasingly isolated internationally.

The Syrian regime has some tough choices to make. It can continue to harbor and support groups devoted to terror, and engage in behavior that calls into question its commitment to regional peace and stability. Or it can act in ways that reflect new strategic realities in the region and help restore hope for a resumption of the Syrian-Israeli track, encourage the emergence of a stable Iraqi neighbor, and create a better economic future for Syria. But it can't have it both ways.

The irony we face, Mr. Chairman—if Damascus' public statements are to be believed—is that the U.S. and Syria share a common vision for the region: a peaceful and stable Iraq ruled by Iraqis, and a just and comprehensive peace between Arabs and Israelis. The challenge we face is in charting a course that will persuade Syria to take the necessary actions to contribute to that vision.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Ambassador Burns.

Ambassador Black, do you have testimony at this time or have you come in support of Ambassador Burns?

Ambassador BLACK. I come in support. I have a couple of brief introductory remarks if that is acceptable.

The CHAIRMAN. Fine, I would appreciate that.

HON. J. COFER BLACK, COORDINATOR, OFFICE OF THE COORDINATOR FOR COUNTERTERRORISM, DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ambassador BLACK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss Syria's role as a state sponsor of terrorism.

There is no doubt that many past Syrian actions are in dire conflict with U.S. interests in the region and that the current posture of the Syrian government towards terrorism continues to be wholly unacceptable. As a state sponsor of terrorism, Syria has repeatedly shown an unwillingness to fundamentally change its behavior regarding support for terrorism.

While we continue to have hope for eventual improvements in Syrian attitudes, policies, and actions, we see little at this time to indicate that Syrian support for terrorism is diminishing. Syria remains a security concern not just because of terrorism, but also because of their pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. Since Under Secretary John Bolton has recently testified on the latter, which is in his area of expertise, I will discuss briefly the former.

The threat to our country posed by states who both sponsor terrorism and pursue weapons of mass destruction is one which we cannot and will not ignore. Syria, a sponsor of numerous terrorist organizations, is a country whose actions we must follow carefully in this regard. While there is currently no information indicating that the Syrian government has transferred weapons of mass destruction to terrorist organizations or would permit such groups to

acquire them, Syria's ties to numerous terrorist groups underlie the reasons for continued attention.

The threat posed by Syria can best be understood by addressing three areas: border security, which is directly related to the security of our forces in Iraq; Syrian government support for Palestinian rejectionist groups; and Syrian support for Lebanese Hizballah. Obviously, many of you share these concerns, which is why the Syria Accountability Act is under consideration in Congress.

Regarding Iraq, Syria took a series of hostile actions towards coalition forces in Iraq. Syria allowed military equipment to flow into Iraq on the eve of and during the war. Syria also permitted volunteers to pass into Iraq to attack our servicemembers during the war. In the period following the conclusion of major military action, foreign fighters have continued to transit into Iraq from Syria.

While the situation on the Syrian border has improved in recent weeks, it is still a major source of concern for us. We see indications that the Syria-Iraq border is more secure now than it has ever been. To put the issue in proper context, in the past there was not the security need for the Syrian government to secure the border to the extent that they must do so now. That is only one factor in this problem.

While it is understandable that the Syrian authorities may have had initial problems in ramping up, what we have found unacceptable was the manner in which the Syrians delayed taking effective action. We are cautiously optimistic that the situation will continue to improve along the border.

We also remain concerned about the possibility of anti-coalition activity being organized inside of Syrian territory. As we have said for some time, Syria provides a safe haven and material support for several Palestinian rejectionist groups, including Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Abu Mousa Organization, and the Popular Struggle Front.

The Syrian government maintains that the offices of these groups are used solely for press purposes and play no leadership or operational role in the conduct of terrorist attacks. We reject this argument, have seen evidence that some of these offices are in fact used clearly for operational purposes. Even if this were not the case, we would continue to insist that the Syrian government close these offices, which maintain vocal public support for these nefarious organizations. Syrian tolerance of Palestinian rejectionist groups' offices in their country shows a lack of commitment to support reasonable efforts towards a comprehensive peace between Israel and Palestine.

Syria also continues to provide safe haven and a policy cover to Hizballah in Lebanon, which has killed hundreds of Americans and numerous others in the past. Syrian support for Hizballah continues to be a major impediment towards progress in our counterterrorism efforts. Syria allows resupply of Hizballah from Iran via Damascus. Syria also allows wanted Hizballah terrorists, including Amag Mugniyah, to transit Syria and find safe haven

there. The Syrian military presence in Lebanon supports Hizballah actions there.

In Syria we see a convergence of hostile rhetoric and a history of support for terrorism. Our bilateral relationship with Syria is a complex one. We share Congress' concerns with respect to Syria and have been engaged in extensive direct dialogue with the highest levels of the Syrian government on a full range of issues, including terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, Lebanon, and Iraq.

Unfortunately, these conversations have borne little fruit in changing Syrian actions on support for terrorism. While there may have been areas of cooperation on certain counterterrorism issues between our two governments, this is not sufficient to counter our grave concern about Syria's continued support for group such as Hamas, PFLP-GC, PIJ, Hizballah, and others.

It should be noted that what we ask of Syria is not unusual nor is it exceptional. We ask them to join the community of nations which reject terrorism as a political tool. We ask them to cease support for groups whose only goal is to kill and to maim in the pursuit of policies which seek to destroy rather than support peace.

We remain optimistic that continued engagement with Syria will one day lead to a change in Syrian behavior, a change that will allow them once again to interact with us on a normal footing. But that change must come from the Syrian government. We will judge them on their actions.

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for allowing me to make my opening statement.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Black follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR COFER BLACK

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss Syria's role as a state sponsor of terrorism.

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Syria remains a security concern not just because of terrorism, but also because of its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. Since Undersecretary John Bolton has recently testified on the latter, which is his area of expertise, I will focus on the former. The threat to our country posed by states who both sponsor terrorism and pursue weapons of mass destruction is one which we cannot and will not ignore.

Syria, a sponsor of numerous terrorist organizations, is a country whose actions we must follow carefully in this regard. While there is currently no information indicating that the Syrian government has transferred WMD to terrorist organizations or would permit such groups to acquire them, Syria's ties to numerous terrorist groups underlie the reasons for our continued attention.

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Iraq

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We also remain concerned about the possibility of anti-coalition activity being organized inside of Syrian territory. I refer you to the intelligence community for its assessment of this issue.

Palestinian Terror Groups

As we have said for some time, Syria provides safe haven and material support for several Palestinian rejectionist groups, including HAMAS, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command (PFLP-GC) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), the Abu Musa Organization (AMO), and the Popular Struggle Front (PSF). The Syrian government maintains that the offices of these groups are used solely for press purposes and play no leadership or operational role in the conduct of terrorist attacks. We reject this argument and have seen evidence that some of these offices are, in fact, used for operational purposes. Even if this were not the case, we would continue to insist that the Syrian government close these offices which maintain vocal public support for these nefarious organizations.

Syrian tolerance of Palestinian rejectionist groups' offices in their country demonstrates a lack of commitment to support reasonable efforts toward a comprehensive peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Lebanese Hizballah

Syria continues to provide safe haven and political cover to Hizballah in Lebanon, a group responsible for killing hundreds of Americans and numerous others in the past. Syrian support for Hizballah continues to be a major impediment towards progress in our counterterrorism efforts. Syria allows resupply of Hizballah from Iran via Damascus. Syria also allows wanted Hizballah terrorists, including Imad Mugniyah, to transit Syria and find haven there. The Syrian military presence in Lebanon supports Hizballah actions there.

Conclusion

In Syria we see a convergence of hostile rhetoric and a history of support for terrorism. Our bilateral relationship with Syria is a complex one. We share Congress' concerns with respect to Syria and have been engaged in extensive, direct dialogue with the highest levels of the Syrian government on a full range of issues—including terrorism, WMD, Lebanon and Iraq. Unfortunately, these conversations have borne little fruit in changing Syrian actions on support for terrorism. While there may have been areas of cooperation on certain counterterrorism issues between our two governments, this is not sufficient to counter our grave concern about Syria's continued support for groups such as HAMAS, PFLP-GC, PIJ, Hizballah, and others.

It should be noted that what we ask of Syria is not unusual nor is it exceptional. We ask them to join the community of nations which reject terrorism as a political tool. We ask them to cease support for groups whose only goal is to kill and maim in the pursuit of policies which seek to destroy rather than support peace. I remain optimistic that continued engagement with Syria will one day lead to a change in Syrian behavior—a change that will allow them once again to interact with us on a normal footing. But that change must come from the Syrian government—we will judge them on their actions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Ambassador Black.

The chair would suggest a first round of questioning of maybe 7 minutes for each of us, and we may wish to have another round if members have not asked all the questions that they would like.

Let me begin by commenting that I appreciated Senator Biden's opening statement. He will probably amplify that further on his own, but it would appear to me that cooperation with Syria immediately following military activity in Iraq looked more promising

than does that activity today. Now, without having any thermometer with which to gauge why people become more interested in cooperating and why they begin to slack off in that, it would appear to be that the Syrian government, including the chief leader, the president of the country, as well as advisers for his father and for himself, may be more tentative in their judgment about our success, that of the United States and the coalition, in Iraq.

To what extent in your judgment are they inclined over the course of days or weeks to take more of a wait and see attitude as opposed to taking activities that are more in consonance with the foreign policy objectives that you have stated? I gather, from reading your papers and those of our other witnesses, that most see the Syrians as a pragmatic people, without necessarily oversentimental ties with the Palestinians or with al-Qaeda or with others who are out there.

But where do their interests lie and to what extent will our success in Iraq lead them back to a path of more cooperation and then perhaps to some fulfillment pragmatically of their own foreign policy objectives? Do you have a thought on that, Ambassador Burns?

Ambassador BURNS. Yes, Senator Lugar. I think you are right. I do not think, at least in my experience, sentiment has ever been the driving impulse in Syrian foreign policy. I think there were a number of miscalculations that the Syrian regime made in the period just before Operation Iraqi Freedom and the beginning of military conflict. A lot of activities across the Iraqi border which—

The CHAIRMAN. Were there miscalculations perhaps that there would not be military activity, in other words that there would not be an attack on Iraq at all?

Ambassador BURNS. Either that there would not be an attack or that it would be far more complicated and protracted than turned out to be the case. I think certainly the rapid success of the coalition militarily got the attention of the Syrian regime. I think that was reflected in the nature of the conversation that Secretary Powell had in early May when he visited Damascus.

In recent weeks, as I mentioned to you, Mr. Chairman, in several areas connected to Iraq there have been some signs of Syrian actions consistent with our interest in a stable, unified Iraq: the vote in favor of Resolution 1511, cooperation over the last couple of weeks with a team of Iraqi and American experts investigating frozen assets in Syrian banks from the former Iraqi regime. There has been a degree of cooperation that we had not seen before and, as Ambassador Black also mentioned, improved efforts on the part of the Syrians to control their border with Iraq.

So in all those areas there are at least some indications of a recognition of the importance of responsible behavior with regard to Iraq and of Syria's interest, which ultimately is what is going to drive Syrian policy, in a unified, stable Iraq and progress toward the Iraqi people regaining control of their own affairs.

Much more remains to be done and we will certainly push hard to see that performance, again in Syria's interest as well as America's, strengthened and improved in the future.

The CHAIRMAN. What other factors could influence Syria to become more cooperative, in addition to contributing to its perception that the coalition is being successful in Iraq? Thus far it does not

appear that economic difficulties in the country have led to particular changes. I suspect that the Senate is likely after this hearing to act on the Syria Accountability Act, which you have mentioned, and that it probably will pass the act, as the House of Representatives did. That would impose additional sanctions, hopefully with flexibility for the administration in the event that diplomatic activity becomes more promising.

In fact we already have a number of sanctions on the country now and it does not appear that economic changes seem to be operative or at least determinative in terms of their activities. What else, in addition to success in Iraq, might change the picture?

Ambassador BURNS. Mr. Chairman, I think success in Iraq, which we are determined, as you know, to achieve, I think is crucial, not just with regard to Syrian behavior, but with regard to our interests throughout the region. I think the other argument that we will continue to try and drive home and that we have made repeatedly to President Asad and others in the Syrian leadership is that Syria is falling farther and farther behind the global economy and a recognition that I think is growing in many other societies in the Arab world that economic, social, political modernization is long overdue.

It is very interesting in recent reports, there have been development reports that have been put out, a growing understanding in the region that home-grown economic and political reform is absolutely essential. There are things the United States could do to help in the region in support of that effort, and our hope certainly is that in Syria, as in other societies, there will be an appreciation of self-interest in moving in those directions, though we have not seen a lot of evidence so far.

The CHAIRMAN. Ambassador Burns, it appears that economic indicators show that many, if not most, states in the Middle East continue to have deteriorating economic circumstances. This does not appear to have been determinative of their foreign policy. In other words, a growing gap occurs with the rest of the world, sliding downhill very rapidly.

Some persons come to us and come to you and they say: Well, these are autocratic regimes, people who have their own agendas quite apart from the ordinary needs of common people for jobs and economic progress. But these regimes are supported. We are accused of supporting them, of propping them up, even in the midst of total default.

In other words, Syria is not an archetype of this, but it is another case in which the economy is not quite a disaster, but heading rapidly to the rocks and shoals comparatively. Yet at the top there does not appear to be any change that is affecting any of that.

Now, we may be right that we can try to cajole them: You ought to do more to help your people and we will do something here. But I am not sure that is working. That is why I probe this a little bit further.

Ambassador BURNS. Well, Mr. Chairman, it is not sinking in in certain societies, you are absolutely right. The truth is that stability in the Middle East, like anyplace else, is not a static phenomenon, and societies in the Middle East, like other parts of the

world, that adapt, that adjust, that take the initiative on political, social, economic reform and look ahead are going to succeed, and those that do not are going to fall further and further behind and ultimately become failed regimes.

I think that is simply the reality. It is not a function of American preaching as it is facts and, as I said, realities that have to be absorbed.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Ambassador.

Senator Biden.

Senator BIDEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, again welcome. I say this not in any pejorative way. The neoconservative view and influence within the administration has argued and written fairly extensively that our use of power when necessary, particularly in the face of the disapprobation of the rest of the world, presents us with an opportunity to leverage that power to get malcontents in other parts of the world to straighten up, as my uncle used to say, straighten up and fly right.

I think there is some truth to what they say, what they write. Some in the administration and some close advisers to the administration outside the administration argue that when we moved successfully in Iraq and our shock and awe program or initiative that we would see a change in behavior on the part of Syria relative to all our concerns, particularly support for terrorists.

It looked like, for a moment anyway, or at least temporarily, when the Secretary of State made his visit to meet with the president of Syria shortly after the Syrians miscalculated in that they thought we would have a longer slog, to use a term from our Secretary of Defense, in bringing about the collapse of the Syria regime, they looked like they were going to take some concrete actions. If I am not mistaken, we demarched them with some specific requests relating to the location, the support, the visibility, the headquarters of and the offices of Hizballah and others.

The initial, if memory serves me, the initial response seemed to be that they were going to take some action, and they did take some at least cosmetic actions. There were proposals from some of us—and I am not suggesting they were not shared by State or the President—that one of the things that we could do to also aid and abet the effort on the Road Map would be to insist that the Syrians allow the Lebanese army to replace on the Israeli border the forces that are there now, and that would have taken, the assumption was, the acquiescence at least of the Syrians, if not the direct intervention of the Syrians.

So we all kind of waited to see what was likely to happen. Am I correct in suggesting that at the end of the day, that is today, not much did happen, notwithstanding what we may or may not have thought would happen after the visit of the Secretary of State? This is no veiled criticism of the Secretary of State. Did we see any activity initially and if we did, did it change? Or where are we today in terms of the specific requests made by the United States of America to the Syrian government to close down offices, etcetera?

Ambassador BURNS. Sir, I think there has been some incremental change, as you mentioned. But the honest answer is it is certainly short of the mark that Secretary Powell had emphasized during that meeting in early May.

With regard to Iraq, as I said, there has been some recent movement on 1511, on borders, on assets held in Syrian banks; still more to be done. With regard to Palestinian terrorist groups—and Ambassador Black may want to add to this—there were some essentially cosmetic changes, as you mentioned, certain offices closing down, but still cadre of people in groups like Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas continuing to operate, harbored by the Syrians, continuing to be involved financially, logistically, in terms of planning and direction of attacks against innocent civilians; a continuing relationship with Hizballah.

You are right, Senator, the Secretary did emphasize, Secretary Powell did emphasize, in early May the concerns we have about Lebanon, the value of allowing the Lebanese armed forces to deploy fully to the border, and we have not seen significant movement in that direction.

Senator BIDEN. I understand that cooperation between Syria and our military in the Mosul area of Iraq has been pretty good, with cross-border trade picking up, Iraqi oil being exported to Syria. And you both know better than I, this region of Iraq has had close historical ties with Syria.

Now, the question that I keep wrestling with—and our witnesses I expect will speak to this a little bit as well—is, there is no doubt in my mind, and I may be wrong, but there is no doubt in my mind that the degree to which cooperation will take place on this broad front of concerns we have is directly related to whether or not they believe we are going to succeed in the region, in Iraq.

Prior to us going into Iraq, a number of us made visits to heads of state throughout the region, and privately every head of state did say what the administration was saying they were privately saying: We have no love for Saddam Hussein; take him down, but if you take him down make sure you finish the job. I do not know how many times I heard that stated.

That was the drumbeat in the background of the administration saying: Although the world says they are against us, they are really not against us; they are really for us doing this. But the tagline always was: Get the job finished, meaning establish stability when it is all said and done. Do not just replace him—I mean, do not just topple him, but replace him.

So there is no doubt in my mind that what you are seeing is a sort of temporary paralysis in the region deciding which way is in my naked self-interest to go, based on whether the Americans are going to finish the job. But what I do not have a sense of—and I realize this is a fairly broad question, but I respect both your judgments, and that is why I am asking it—what does your instinct tell you about whether or not they would like us to succeed in Iraq?

I am ambivalent on that point. I am not—I can see a scenario where if I am sitting in Damascus it is very much in my interest for there to be on the one side a stable non-threatening Iraq to my north. On the other side, I can say: Well, God, I hope any of those notions of democracy or representative government do not spread to me; it could be dangerous.

Have you run the calculus as to whether or not—not whether or not they are trying to make it more difficult and not whether or not their feinting and bobbing and weaving has anything to do with

the outcome. What do you think they think is in their interest? And is it split within Syria between the old guard, if there is an old and new guard, because that is another—you know, we always look for these things. We are always looking for Jeffersons behind some rock somewhere who is going to pop up and democratize a nation. They seldom, if ever, exist.

But I realize the question is fairly broad, but would you be willing to engage us a little bit in your sense of what you think Iraq would—I mean, what you think Syria would view as in their interest relative to Iraq? The reason I ask the question—and I conclude with this—is because assume there was—it was in their interest for them to have a say in what emerges in Baghdad whenever. Then is the six plus two arrangement that we used in Afghanistan, does that have any—is there any reason for us to be engaging Syria about the future of Iraq?

That is more like an essay question. I apologize, but I would appreciate it if you would just speak to us a little bit about that.

Ambassador BURNS. Sure, I would be glad to try to, Senator Biden. First, as you suggested, historically there is no love lost between the Ba'athists in Damascus and the Saddam Hussein regime in Baghdad. A long history of tension between the two of them. So objectively in many ways it would seem at least to be in Syria's political interest to see that regime gone. Commercially, there has been a lot of interaction in the past and in the future a healthy Iraqi economy, a prosperous, stable Iraq, would seem to offer a number of possibilities for all of its neighbors.

I think you are right, Senator, to suggest that, in fact I am certain that, there are some well-entrenched interests in Syria who view the prospect of a unified, prosperous, politically progressive or democratic regime and system of governance emerging in Iraq as threatening in some respects. But I think the bottom line probably is the Syrian regime is looking very carefully at what is going on in Iraq, and I think the real bottom line, as you suggested, is that success in Iraq, defined as the Iraqi people regaining control of their own affairs and living in peace with their neighbors, will probably have as great an impact as anything else on the calculations not just of the Syrian regime but others in the region. That is why the President is so determined to help Iraqis achieve that result.

But I think there is a certain conflict in the minds of many Syrians in the regime about that outcome.

Senator BIDEN. Mr. Black, do you have any comment?

Ambassador BLACK. Senator, I could only echo what Assistant Secretary Burns said, but also what you have said. I think it is right on the mark. They are very pragmatic. They assess their environment and they will attempt to encourage those relationships and those situations that are in their interest.

I think we all would hope that they would appreciate that a free Iraq that is prosperous, that is a good trading partner, on the whole is clearly to their advantage.

Senator BIDEN. I thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Biden.

Senator Chafee.

**STATEMENT OF HON. LINCOLN CHAFEE,
U.S. SENATOR FROM RHODE ISLAND**

Senator CHAFEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome to the witnesses.

We had an opportunity in the last several weeks to visit the region and in our trip to Turkey we were fortunate enough to meet with Prime Minister Erdogan, and I asked him about the Syria Accountability Act, what would his advice be. He said that Assad really wants to steer his country more towards the middle—and of course Turkey shares a long border, of course, as you know, with Syria, and you might argue who would know better than someone who shares that long border with Syria the dynamics there.

He said, as I was saying, that Assad wants to steer his country more towards the middle, and of course he has some political dynamics and some generals that make it difficult, but he does want to go in that direction; and by passing this bill it just will make that harder.

According to Congressional Research Service, most if not all of the sanctions contemplated by the Accountability Act, the Syria Accountability Act, can already be imposed by the administration. Through the good work of Chairman Lugar, the House-passed version of the bill will be amended here in the Senate to give the President more flexibility in waiving the bill's sanctions. This means that a bill that a bill is widely perceived as a crackdown on Syria, but it has little substantive effect.

So is this legislation really a lose-lose for the United States? Are we getting little additional muscle against Syria while further antagonizing the Arab world? I also say on our trip to the region, the same was true in Jordan; we heard the exact same thing: This passage would be a mistake; we are doing exactly what I said, forcing Syria to react in the opposite direction, and that the timing is not good.

Can you comment, Secretary Burns?

Ambassador BURNS. Yes, sir. First, I would say that I hope that the impression that you heard from Turkish leaders is right. I hope that we will see actions on the part of the Syrian leadership that open up further possibilities in the future to work together on issues, whether it is Iraq or in other areas.

As I said in my opening remarks, unfortunately we have not seen that kind of a fundamental change in behavior so far. The administration's position, as you know, sir, with regard to the Syria Accountability Act is that we are not going to oppose its passage. We are quite appreciative of the efforts of the chairman and others to look at ways in which the President's flexibility in conducting foreign policy and our policy towards Syria can be preserved, and we believe that is very important, and we will take a careful look at the language as it emerges.

I think finally, Senator, it is hard for me to assess right now what the impact of passage of the Syria Accountability Act, should it be passed by the Congress, will be on Syrian behavior, on our relations with Syria. We have made very clear in repeated conversations with the Syrian leadership that inaction in the areas Secretary Powell first outlined last May is going to have consequences.

We have made equally clear, as I said before, our willingness to build on issues or areas that should be of common concern for us. So I can only hope, I guess to conclude, that we will begin to see that kind of movement.

But in the mean time, we have to recognize that we have some quite significant problems in the relationship and those problems are reflected in the Syria Accountability Act.

Senator CHAFEE. As you testified, you do not know how Syria will react. So is it not worth the risk, if already the President has the powers to impose sanctions? Why take the risk on a high profile? We all know how these types of legislation get high visibility in the Arab world. Why even risk it if you do not know how they will react? The President already has the powers. Is it just the train is going down the track, you know the votes are going to pass, and you cannot stop it, so you are just having a not-opposed attitude? But why take that risk?

Ambassador BURNS. Well, sir, as I said, we obviously hope that not just the Syria Accountability Act should it pass, but the other points we have tried to emphasize in our direct contacts with the Syrians—and I would add also in what we have urged others, our friends in Europe, in the Quartet, and in the region, to emphasize to the Syrians in their own contacts, that that will have an impact.

So our hope is, not just in terms of disincentives, which the Syria Accountability Act represents, but also in terms of the potential for a more normal kind of relationship, which we believe to be very much in Syrian self-interest, that taken together those steps will have an impact. But our position on the Syria Accountability Act remains as I described it.

Senator CHAFEE. All right, very good. Thank you.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator Chafee.

Senator Coleman.

**STATEMENT OF HON. NORM COLEMAN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MINNESOTA**

Senator COLEMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, I greatly appreciate your testimony, clearness in an area in which there is not always clarity. I believe we—I think we would all like Asad to steer a course to the middle. If we could get there that would be great. My question is how we get there, and I think first we have got to look at how they act or how they are acting.

Clearly, in the buildup to Operation Iraqi Freedom and your testimony, Secretary Burns, illicit oil trade, illicit transshipment of dual use and military-related items, I think night goggles that were used to kill our soldiers potentially, and today very clearly Syria being involved in supporting Hamas and Hizballah and a whole range of terrorist organizations that kill people; and as I read the testimony, not just in terms of sometimes a physical presence, but operationally. It seems that this is an operational center for folks that are out there undermining the peace process, taking lives.

So the question is how do you impact that? It appears to me that this, quote, “pragmatic” formula is that the stronger we are, the

more likely they will be to perhaps steer a middle. But it does not seem like it is because there is a desire to steer a middle. It does not seem like because there is an interest in it. It is because if we are strong all of a sudden they may stop doing what they are doing and have been doing for a long time, which is supporting terrorism.

Are there—help me understand if that is it. It almost seems as if they kind of play with two hands: On the one hand they take some actions regarding al-Qaeda and when it looked like we were plowing through Iraq those seemed to be substantive actions; and at the same time, it is like somebody picking your pocket, in this case I think more than picking your pocket, I think clubbing you over the head with support of terrorism.

Other than being strong, in which we force somebody to simply do the right thing, are there other things that we can do vis a vis with Syria? How do you deal with a nation like this beyond just simply being stronger than they would like you to be?

Ambassador BURNS. Well, Senator, a very complicated issue which we now continue to wrestle with. Obviously, success in Iraq, success in our other policies in the region, is critically important, as both Senators Lugar and Biden emphasized.

Second, we continue to stress our commitment to comprehensive peace in the region. It is important for us to continue to do everything we can to revive some hope in the Road Map and in prospects for peace between Palestinians and Israelis and to keep the door open on the Syrian and Lebanon tracks as well.

It is important for us in our conversations, not just directly with the Syrians but also with the Quartet, with the other European friends, with other partners in the region, to work with them to help drive home those same points in Syria, because this is not just an interest of the United States. It is I believe a widely shared interest.

We hope also that that longer term need, which is as true in Syria, at least as true in Syria, as any other society in the Arab world, to modernize economically, to open up more educational and political opportunities, is going to be a direction in which that regime wants to move.

So again, I do not have any magic formula to offer, Senator. It requires an awful lot of hard work. It requires a lot of very candid discussions. It requires us drawing lines where we have to draw lines on aspects of Syrian behavior, and that is what we are determined to do.

Senator COLEMAN. I appreciate that. I would note in particular with other partners. If other partners came to us and said Asad is trying to steer towards the middle, go back and tell them: Well, tell him to stop supporting Hizballah because they are going to try to kill us, stop supporting Hamas because they are undermining the possibility of peace in the Middle East. And to Abdullah, who has been a good ally and somebody I believe we can trust, the same message, though: Deliver the message to the Syrians that if there is to be peace they have got to be part of the process and they have got to be part of the solution, not, as we used to say in the sixties, simply part of the problem.

Ambassador BURNS. Yes, sir, Senator. The only thing I would add to that is that is particularly true with regard to the legitimate

aspirations and interests of Palestinians in moving toward a state. The actions that groups like Hamas and Jihad have taken have done as much to undermine those aspirations as anything else, made it that much more difficult for the Palestinian Authority to pull itself together and provide the kind of leadership that the Palestinians need and deserve.

That is a message that the Syrians need to hear, not just from us but from others as well.

Senator COLEMAN. You have a difficult job in a difficult area of the world, and I appreciate the work that you do.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator Coleman.

Senator Biden.

Senator BIDEN. I am anxious to get to the second panel as well, Mr. Chairman, but I have one question.

Bill, can you tell us a little bit about U.S.-European attitudes and where they diverge relative to Syria? The Europeans historically have had a slightly different take on all the Middle East, quite frankly, than we have. That does not suggest that their take has anything to do—that it is intentionally counterproductive to our interests.

But do our allies in Europe agree with our approach to Syria? Is there any realistic possibility of getting on the same page and forging a united front with regard to Syria and their support of terror? Tell me a little bit about—you should have a lot of discussions with them as well. I mean, where are we in terms of that dynamic?

Ambassador BURNS. I think it is a very important point, Senator. Obviously, the Syrians need to hear, if we are going to have any impact on their behavior, not just from the United States, but from others. I think some of our friends in Europe have been pretty direct with the Syrian leadership about some of the concerns that I described to you today, again simply because they reflect real concerns on the part of Europeans as well.

That is certainly true with regard to Syria's support for terrorist groups. I think it is increasingly true also with regard to the negative impact that Syrian harboring of those groups has had on the chances to revive the Road Map. Some of our Quartet partners have also been pretty direct with the Syrians about those concerns.

At the same time, we have all tried to make clear that the door is open toward comprehensive peace, that this administration, like its predecessors, is committed to doing everything we can to work with the parties to revive progress on that track as well. So I guess to answer your question, Senator, I think there is potential to do more with our friends in Europe on the issue of Syria. I think we need to keep working hard at it. I would not want to pretend to you that our interests and approaches are identical because they are not, but I think there is a fair amount of overlap, which we need to keep working on.

Senator BIDEN. Well, it seems to me that to the extent that we could harmonize those views we would have a—maybe I have been here too long, but I remember when we used to say—I remember when the gentleman about to testify was ambassador in that area of the world and we always talked about it in terms of U.S.-Soviet influence, and we talked about the Syrians having a godfather to

the north and the reason we were not going to make much progress with Syria.

And when the wall came down and when the Soviet empire crumbled and the ability of or the desire, both ability and desire, of the former Soviets, now Russians, was not nearly as invasive or involved or as capable of affecting events, there was the brief moment where there was hope that the rest of the world united would be able to bring some sense with a common purpose, a common front.

It seems to me that is one of the real lost opportunities. I do not mean just—I am not talking about this administration, the last administration. I mean, rationalizing the policy to the extent that you can.

I did not tell the truth there. I have one more question. Mr. Black, I asked you this in a different context, but if you are able to publicly answer this it would be useful. Has the United States concluded that weapons of mass destruction from Iraq were dispersed to Syria, as General Clapper of the National Imagery and Mapping Agency told the New York Times? Do you have any hard evidence that that is the case, as stated by Clapper, General Clapper, that Iraqis did disperse to Syria weapons of mass destruction?

Ambassador BLACK. I appreciate the question. I will have to take it for the record. I specialize in counterterrorism. Weapons of mass destruction is the preserve of others. If I may, Senator, let me take that for the record and get back to you on that.

[The information referred to above was not available before this hearing was sent to press.]

Senator BIDEN. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Biden.

Let me just carry that one step further. Are any of our allies, or at least countries with whom we have very strong relations, in addition to our European allies, active with us in our diplomacy with Syria? For example, have Egypt, the Saudi Arabians, or anyone else in the neighborhood, for maybe their own national interests, been involved with us in moving the Syrians toward a more constructive situation?

Ambassador BURNS. Yes, sir. We have had extensive conversations with the Egyptians, with the Jordanians, as well as with the Saudis and others, about this issue. It was a subject, for example, in Secretary Powell's meeting with President Mubarak about a week ago in Sharm el Sheikh. So it is natural for us to consult carefully with our friends in the region.

We do not always see eye to eye on these issues, but I think there is a shared interest in trying to drive home the message about working as hard as we all possibly can to fight terrorism and violence, which again have done so much to obstruct our deep interest in reviving hope in the Road Map. I am sure those consultations will continue and I am sure efforts will continue on the part of our friends in the region.

The CHAIRMAN. I join all members of our committee in thanking you—

Senator BOXER. Could I have—

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, I am sorry.

Senator BOXER. I just snuck in on you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Boxer.

**STATEMENT OF HON. BARBARA BOXER,
U.S. SENATOR FROM CALIFORNIA**

Senator BOXER. Thank you. Thank you so much. In the nick of time, I stopped the inevitable gavel.

The CHAIRMAN. Exactly.

Senator BOXER. As the author of the Syria Accountability Act, I want to thank Chairman Lugar for his help now. He is very determined that we have a waiver, the broad waiver. It is in place, and I think we are ready to go.

I wanted to, because I know there are some who do not favor it, to lay out why I think it is important very briefly and then ask one question to you, either of you who wishes to answer.

I have always believed in life that the truth will set you free. You have to tell the truth. I especially think it is important in foreign policy. Now, clearly diplomacy means that you tell the truth in the most sensitive way, and you are the masters of that. I am not good at that, but you are very good at that, and I really have to say that our chairman and ranking member are very good at that. I am a little more to the point, although I think Senator Biden is known for speaking straight from the shoulder quite often.

But when it comes to Syria, it is about time we just told the truth. I feel that way about Saudi Arabia, although I do not quite know what the truth is because we cannot get information that we really ought to have. But that is another hearing for another time.

So really what we are saying is that the President can impose sanctions, and I wanted it to be must impose sanctions, but with the compromise he can impose sanctions, which I think are very wisely ratcheted up, if Syria does not cease providing support for international terrorist groups and does not allow terrorist groups such as Hamas, Hizballah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and others to maintain facilities in territory under their control.

This is a terrible problem. This is a haven for terrorists. You know, as the President said after 9–11, we cannot have people shielding terrorists. So we can no longer walk away. I am the happiest person when Syria helps us in some way or another. I encourage that. But still in all, you cannot really help us in the long run if you are allowing these terrorists to be there.

Lebanon occupation, another one. Development and deployment of long-range ballistic missiles and research into such weapons, and ceasing all support for terrorist activities inside of Iraq, and I know others have talked about that.

So what do we do here? We just simply give the President or, shall we say, we—as Senator Chafee said, the President could do this anyway, but the Congress will go on record when we finally pass this act, which I think is long overdue—and I disagreed so strongly with the administration when Secretary Powell said this will not be helpful, having this act, this will not be helpful. That was just a few months ago.

Then he went over there and sat with Syria and said: You know, you have got to watch out for that Congress; they are going to pass

the Syria Accountability Act. Well, I thought that was pretty helpful of us to have that there.

So you know, I just think when I look at this list: prohibiting export to Syria of any item on the U.S. munitions list, imposing two or more of the following sanctions: the export of products of the U.S. other than food and medicine to Syria; and prohibiting U.S. business from investing and operating; prohibiting Syrian aircraft from taking off or landing in the U.S. And it goes on: diplomats in D.C. can only travel within a 25-mile radius.

That is harsh. It is very harsh. But what they are doing is harsh. And if we hope to wrap our arms around this terrorism issue, we have to start telling the truth and putting something behind it. Frankly, if you were to ask people, I am a person what so hesitates to move towards war. I am probably the last person, one of the last, that will vote for war. I have done it, but I do it very rarely.

So why would I support this? Because this is a way to avoid a military confrontation, because we are sending a very clear signal. We are not going to surprise someone in the middle of the night and attack them. We are saying this is bad, this is wrong, this goes against world norms, and we are ready to push forward with economic sanctions.

I think that is a way to avoid a confrontation. That is the last thing we need. It is the last thing we want. We all want a peaceful world.

So my question, and then I am done, is: What really triggered the change of the administration on my bill? That is my question.

Ambassador BURNS. Thanks, Senator Boxer. I think we have worked very hard, and I do not think anybody has worked harder than Secretary Powell, to try and speak the plain truth on these issues, as candidly and directly as we could with the Syrian leadership. We continue to hope for changes in Syrian behavior and we will continue to work hard to achieve them, but hope alone is not a reliable basis for policy. The administration has recognized that there are elements of Syrian behavior right now which cause real problems for our interests, as they have for years.

It was against that backdrop that the White House took the decision that we would not oppose the passage of the Syria Accountability Act. As I said, it is very hard—as I said, I am sorry, Senator Boxer, before you came—

Senator BOXER. I am sorry, I am involved with these fires.

Ambassador BURNS. Not at all, no.

It is hard to predict what the impact is going to be. We certainly hope that the passage of the act, should it be passed, as well as our continuing direct efforts with the Syrians, our efforts with the Europeans and others, is going to have an impact, a positive impact.

Senator BOXER. So there was not anything specific that changed your mind that they are doing since the war or anything else? It is just an accumulation of behavior that all of a sudden you thought this is the time?

Ambassador BURNS. It is an accumulation. I am not sure if it was an all of a sudden decision as much as it is an accumulation of efforts on our part that did not produce, have not yet produced, all the results we want to see. We are going to keep at it, keep

open the possibility of more normal relations, but that is going to require tangible actions on the part of the Syrian leadership.

Senator BOXER. Thank you for your flexibility.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you very much, Senator Boxer, for coming to the hearing at a timely moment.

Senator BOXER. Yes, right.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, we thank you both again, and we will now proceed with our next panel. That panel includes Dr. Patrick Clawson, the Honorable Richard Murphy, Dr. Murhaf Jouejati, and Mr. Flynt Leverett.

Gentlemen, thank you very much for joining us this morning. I would like for you to testify in the order that I introduced you, and that will be first of all Dr. Patrick Clawson. Please proceed.

**STATEMENT OF PATRICK CLAWSON, PH.D., DEPUTY
DIRECTOR, WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY**

Dr. CLAWSON. Thank you, sir. Let me summarize my statement, please.

Since assuming the Syrian presidency in June 2000 on the death of his father, Hafez Al-Asad, Bashar Asad has established a track record. The regime change in Syria has been bad for Syria, bad for the Middle East, and bad for U.S.-Syrian relations. In every area of concern to the United States, Bashar Asad's rule has been worse than that of his father, which is impressive given how bad a ruler was his father, and the problems are growing, not diminishing.

Let me just briefly summarize the areas where Bashar's track record has been worse than that of Hafez Asad. On the areas where we had differences with Hafez Asad and where we had good reason to hope that Bashar would make a difference, things have gotten worse. For instance, anti-peace process terrorism. My boss, the Director of the Washington Institute, Dennis Ross, has written in the *Wall Street Journal*, "Hafez Asad was no slouch when it came to threatening Israel, but he controlled the flow of Iranian arms to Hizballah and he never provided Syrian weapons directly. Bashar Asad seems to lack his father's sense of limits."

Hafez Asad never met with the secretary general of Hizballah, Mr. Nasrollah. Bashar Asad meets with him frequently and treats him like his senior adviser and mentor.

Second, weapons of mass destruction. Rather than just maintaining the already troubling capabilities that Syria had when he came to office, Bashar Asad has plowed ahead with developing more sophisticated capabilities, worse chemical weapons, and longer range missiles.

On Lebanon, despite Israeli withdrawal in May 2000, Bashar Asad has insisted that Hizballah retain its arms, thereby making it a destabilizing and radical force in Lebanese politics.

On economic and political reform, the great hope was that Bashar Asad would make economic growth his priority, and indeed there was a Damascus spring with limited liberalization when he came to office. But winter set in early. For participating in civil society meetings 2 years ago, 10 human rights activists have been sentenced to prison for 2 to 5 years and just this week a military court is trying 14 more human rights activists.

On the areas where Hafez Asad had some minimal cooperation with U.S. interests, things have gotten worse under Bashar. Peace negotiations with Israel, they are completely shut down. Damascus now rarely bothers to pretend that it is willing to talk to Israel. On the issue of Iraq, under Hafez Asad for better than 10 years there was a “do no evil” approach, not getting in the way of U.S. policy towards Iraq. Now, instead Bashar Asad has shown a willingness to work with the worst forces in Iraq. Not only did he cooperate closely with Saddam Hussein on economic relations while Syria was still in power, but even as Saddam’s regime was falling Bashar Asad remained friendly and provided assistance to the Saddamites.

Then finally there is the question of radical Islamist terrorism. One can complain about many things about Hafez Asad, but he had a firm hand, indeed a cruel and inhuman hand, toward Islamist terrorists. Bashar Asad I am afraid has changed that approach. Initially, after the September 11th, 2001, attacks Syria did cooperate with the United States against al-Qaeda, but that has changed.

Ambassador Black, Mr. Black, was referring earlier to our ambiguous—our dissatisfaction, excuse me, with the ambiguous record of the Syrians. Let me just note, there was a very interesting case in Italy recently in which the Italian prosecutors going after an al-Qaeda cell showed that Syria, in their words, had “functioned as a hub for an al-Qaeda network,” and the detailed telephone wiretaps that the Italian police presented showed how this al-Qaeda cell had been coordinating its activities in Syria and through Syria.

So Bashar Asad seems to be campaigning to join the axis of evil. He needs to be confronted with a starker choice: bigger sticks if he persists in his path, but bigger carrots if he makes significant progress in some of the areas of our concern.

Whether or not the Syria Accountability Act becomes law, the United States has a variety of other instruments it could use to turn up the heat on Syria. The Asad regime cares deeply about statements by top U.S. officials about the legitimacy of that government and there is much that we can do to reach out to support pro-democracy activists in Washington. It is interesting to note that in 2 weeks time there will be a meeting here in Washington of Syrian pro-democracy activists.

Two years ago, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy published an optimistic monograph full of hope the Bashar Asad would improve governance, open up Syria to the outside world, let Lebanon regain its sovereignty, and make peace with Israel. That study, prepared under my direction by an Israeli scholar, showed what an opportunity Bashar Asad had. He has not made good use of his first 3 years.

Let us hope that, if faced with starker choices between a better future and real risks for his regime, he will make better use of the coming years.

Thank you, sir.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Clawson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PATRICK CLAWSON

Since assuming the Syrian presidency in June 2000 on the death of his father Hafez Al-Asad, Bashar Al-Asad has established a track record. The regime change in Syria has been bad for Syria, bad for the Middle East, and bad for U.S.-Syrian

relations. In every area of concern to the United States, Bashar Asad's rule has been worse than that of his father—which is impressive, given how bad a ruler was his father. And the problems are growing, not diminishing. The risk is that if Washington basically ignores Syria, Bashar Asad will go from bad to worse.

Bashar Asad's track record makes depressing reading. Things have gotten worse in the areas where Hafez Asad was a problem—and where there was good reason to hope Bashar Asad would make improvements:

- Anti-peace-process terrorism. Commenting about Bashar Asad's provision to Hizballah of Syrian 270 mm rockets which threaten Israel's third largest city (Haifa), Washington Institute Director Dennis Ross wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*, "Hafez Asad was no slouch when it came to threatening Israel. But he controlled the flow of Iranian arms to Hizballah, and he never provided Syrian weapons directly. Bashar Asad seems to lack his father's sense of limits."¹ Besides the provision of these dangerous rockets, another sign of Bashar Asad's imbalance is that Hafez Asad never met with Hizballah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrollah; Bashar Asad not only meets and telephones Nasrollah often, but Bashar Asad goes so far as to treat Nasrollah like his respected mentor and advisor. While Bashar Asad promised Secretary of State Colin Powell during his May 2003 visit to Damascus that Syria would take concrete steps against terrorists operating out of Syria, Powell has described Syria's actions since then as "limited steps" which "are totally inadequate."²
- WMD. Rather than just maintaining Syria's already troubling capabilities to hit Israel with hundreds of CW-tipped Scud missiles, Bashar Asad has ploughed ahead with developing more sophisticated capabilities, including more toxic and persistent chemical weapons such as VX and longer-range missiles. According to reports from the CIA, Syria is building up a domestic missile industry, working on both solid propellant and liquid propellant product capabilities.
- Lebanon. Hafez Asad had the excuse of Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon which he could claim as justification for the continued Syrian military presence in Lebanon and for Syria's insistence that Hizballah be allowed to have a potent military militia, years after all civil-war-era militias were disarmed. Israeli withdrawal in May 2000 ended that excuse, but Bashar Asad has insisted that Hizballah retain its arms, thereby making it a destabilizing radical force in Lebanese politics. He has pulled about half of the 30,000 Syrian troops out of Lebanon but he has used Syrian secret police to continue to control the increasingly restive Lebanese.³
- Economic and political reform. The great hope was that Bashar Asad would make economic growth his priority, and that he would therefore allow more space for the private sector and more interaction with the outside world—civil society could begin to emerge. Initially, there was a Damascus Spring with limited liberalization—but winter came early, as those expressing criticisms were rounded up. For participating in civil society meetings in 2001, ten human rights activists were sentenced to prison for two to five years.⁴ Last week, a military court began a kangaroo trial of fourteen human rights activists arrested for attending an August 2003 lecture marking the fortieth anniversary of the declaration of a state of emergency in Syria. Meanwhile, the September 2003 government reshuffle bodes ill for the few economic reforms Bashar Asad instituted in his first year. The new prime minister, Muhammad Naji Otri, can best be described as an old-style Ba'athist hack.

And on the areas where Hafez Asad had at least some minimal cooperation with U.S. interests, things have gotten dramatically worse under Bashar Asad:

- Peace negotiations with Israel are completely shut down. Damascus rarely bothers to pretend it is willing to talk to Israel. Syria has been unhelpful to initiatives to advance the peace process, including its efforts to twist the 2002 Saudi initiative at the Arab League to convert it from an offer to Israel normal relations with the Arab world into a restatement of maximalist Arab demands. Furious at the Saudi initiative, Bashar Asad went so far as to organize a rare mass protest in Damascus against the plan. Syria has encouraged the fiction

¹ Dennis Ross, "The Hidden Threat in the Mideast," *Wall Street Journal*, June 24, 2002.

² Press conference by Colin Powell, June 20, 2003.

³ Estimates of Syrian troop strength in Lebanon differ; the source here is Alfred Prados, "Syria: U.S. Relations and Bilateral Issues," Congressional Research Service paper IB92075, updated October 10, 2003, p 5.

⁴ Amnesty International regularly covers the miserable human rights situation in Syria; cf. its October 21, 2003 press release about the start of the military court trial.

that Israel has not fully withdrawn from Lebanon, despite the UN Security Council's firm determination that Israel has fulfilled its obligations under UN resolutions. Syrian policy appears to confirm the skeptics who thought that an Alawite-dominated government wants to keep the conflict with Israel going so as to justify its repressive rule as necessary for national unity against the external enemy.

- The “do no evil” approach towards Iraq has been replaced with a bold willingness to take risks to work with the worst forces in Iraq. Whereas his father had a cold if not hostile relationship towards Saddam, Bashar Asad embraced him, re-opening an oil pipeline which had been closed for twenty years; between one and two billion dollars a year worth of oil flowed through that pipeline, though it is not clear how the revenue was shared between the two dictators. Bashar Asad flat-out lied to Secretary of State Colin Powell when he personally promised in March 2001 that any revenue from the pipeline would go into the UN oil-for-food program—a promise Powell thought sufficiently important that he had President Bush woken to share the good news. To be sure, in November 2002, Syria voted in the UN Security Council for Resolution 141 demanding Iraqi compliance with past UN orders, but it seems that Syria, like France, believed that resolution could be invoked to prevent U.S. military action against Iraq.

Syrian policy got worse as the war approached. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has accused Syria of sending Saddam's forces on the eve of the war night-vision goggles, antitank weapons, aircraft parts, and ammunition.⁵ During the war, Bashar Asad allowed thousands of irregulars to cross the border to fight on Saddam's side; busloads of Syrian jihadists were joined by warriors from across the Arab world. What is particularly difficult to understand is why Bashar Asad remained friendly to the Saddam clan even after they lost power; Rumsfeld has accused Damascus of providing safe haven to fleeing Ba'ath officials.⁶ As recently as September, both Defense and State Department officials referred to a continuing flow of resistance volunteers across the Syrian border.⁷ There are credible reports that Syria remains a safe haven for former Saddamites. Treasury Department officials have pressed Syria, with no known success, to live up to its obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 1443 to surrender to the U.S.-administered Fund for Development in Iraq the \$3 billion in Iraqi assets held in Syrian-controlled banks.⁸

- The firm—indeed, cruel and inhumane—control over Islamists under Hafez Asad has been replaced with a permissive attitude for those who wish to attack U.S. interests. The concern in Hafez Asad's time was his vicious repression of those with even modest Islamist tendencies, most evident in the 1982 slaughter of 10,000 residents of Hama. Initially, the hope was that Bashar would ease the state's heavy hand on the genuinely religious while at the same time preventing radical Islamist terrorists from using Syrian soil. And indeed, right after the September 11, 2001 attacks, Syria did cooperate with the United States in going after al-Qaeda elements. But as State Department coordinator for counterterrorism Coffer Black said in May 2003, “We clearly don't have the full support of the Syrian government on the Al-Qaeda problem. They have allowed Al-Qaeda personnel to come in and virtually settle in Syria with their knowledge and their support.”⁹ Moreover, according to Italian prosecutors in their indictment of al-Qaeda members, “Syria has functioned as a hub for an al Qaeda network.” The Italian police wiretaps found that the suspects' conversations “paint a detailed picture of overseers in Syria coordinating the movement of recruits and money.” As State Department spokesman said on October 8 when asked about the Syrian Accountability Act, “Frankly, the Syrians have done so little with regard to terrorism that we don't have a lot to work with.”¹⁰

⁵For references, see Max Abrahms, “When Rogues Defy Reason: Bashar's Syria,” *Middle East Quarterly*, Fall 2003, p 53.

⁶For references, see the excellent article by Eyal Zisser, “Syria and the United States: Bad Habits Die Hard,” *Middle East Quarterly*, Summer 2003, pp 29–38.

⁷See Prados, “Syria: U.S. Relations,” p 6.

⁸Douglas Jehl, “U.S. Believes Syrian Banks Hold \$3 Billion in Iraqi Funds,” *New York Times*, October 21, 2003, p. A8.

⁹Black's statement and the Italian indictment referred to in the next sentence are from Matthew Levitt, “Terror from Damascus, Part II: Hizballah and Al-Qaeda Terrorist Activity in Syria,” Washington Institute *Peacewatch* No. 421, May 9, 2003.

¹⁰Cited in Prados, “Syria: U.S. Relations,” p 15.

And then there is Syrian vitriol directed against the United States. Bashar Asad has warned Arabs against U.S. friendship, calling it “more fatal than its hostility.”¹¹ Syria’s attitude towards the war with Iraq was spelled out by Foreign Minister Faruq ash-Shara: “We want Iraq’s [that is, Saddam’s] victory.”¹² Bashar Asad seems to be campaigning to join the axis of evil. He needs to be confronted with a starker choice: bigger sticks if he persists in this path, but bigger carrots if he makes significant progress in several of the areas outlined above.

It is in this context that the Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003 recently passed the House of Representatives. This Act provides the President flexibility, such that he could initially impose modest penalties from the list of six in the law while at the same time he could suggest to Damascus that failure to make progress on the matters of concern to Washington would lead him to impose some of the tougher penalties in that list of six. Some might say that the Act is largely symbolic, but do not underestimate the importance of symbols. The reaction by Damascus to the Act’s progress—extensive coverage in the Syrian press and frequent statements by Syrian officials—demonstrates how deeply the Syrian government cares about the U.S. stance towards their actions.

Whether or not some version of the Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act becomes law, the United States has a variety of other instruments it can use to turn up the heat on Syria. Washington can hit hard at the legitimacy of the Asad dynasty through tough statements from top officials supporting democracy in Syria. Radio Sawa, which has a wide audience among Arab youth, could do tough reporting about Syria’s corruption, human rights violations and miserable economic performance. U.S. officials at various levels could meet in public with Syrian dissidents. It is encouraging to note that there will be a meeting in Washington in two weeks time of Syrian pro-democracy activists. Were State Department officials to attend the meeting, the message to Damascus would be clear.

At the same time, the United States could consider some carrots. Initial steps could build on Bashar Asad’s interest in computer technology, e.g., providing computer education—either over the internet or via a Peace Corps program in Syria—and enhancing training opportunities for Syrians in the United States. Should relations improve further, Washington could help promote Syria as a place where U.S. companies—especially in telecommunications, high tech, and oil/gas exploration—should pursue business.

It would be useful if U.S. actions were coordinated with the European Union (EU), which is planning to sign a trade association agreement with Syria in the near future. Surely it would be appropriate for the EU to adopt towards Syria the same stance it has about Iran’s problematic policies; just as the EU openly says that progress towards a trade cooperation agreement with Iran must go hand in hand with progress on WMD proliferation, counter-terrorism, the stance on Middle East peace, and human rights, so any EU agreement with Syria should be contingent on progress on these fronts. The United States could offer to the EU that it would help strengthen Brussels hand in negotiations on these points by making clear that progress made with the EU would also lead Washington to provide trade- and investment-related breaks for Syria, e.g., relief on the \$366 million in debt Syria owes to the U.S. government—relief which would have little practical implication for U.S. taxpayers, since Syria has not made payments on that debt for years (\$245 million is in arrears).

Two years ago, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy published an optimistic monograph full of hope Bashar Asad would improve governance, open up Syria to the outside world, let Lebanon regain its sovereignty, and make peace with Israel.¹³ That study, prepared under my direction by an Israeli scholar, showed what an opportunity Bashar Asad had. He has not made good use of his first three years. Let us hope that if faced with starker choices between a better future and real risks for his regime, he will make better use of the coming years.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you very much, Dr. Clawson.
Ambassador Richard Murphy.

¹¹In his speech at the Arab summit at Sharm al-Sheikh, as carried on Syrian television, March 1, 2003.

¹²Syrian Arab News Agency, March 30, 2003.

¹³Yossi Baidatz, *Bashar’s First Year: From Ophthalmology to a National Vision*, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Policy Focus No. 41, July 2001.

**STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD MURPHY, SENIOR FELLOW
FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS**

Ambassador MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the invitation to speak to the committee. My statement has been submitted for the record. I will only touch on its highlights.

Syria has been a perennial source of frustration for successive American administrations, which have nonetheless seen fit to stay in as close touch as possible, knowing that Damascus could play a key role in a general Arab-Israeli peace process. There is a great deal of mutual frustration and our meeting today takes place at a time when there is regrettably little prospect for forward movement on the Arab-Israeli peace process.

Syria nonetheless, as Dr. Clawson said, it is sensitive to statements by American leaders and it very much values continued dialogue with the United States. It would, I know, welcome a renewed peace process.

But our dialogue is so often the dialogue of the deaf. We see Syria as unresponsive to our demands that it curb terrorism. Syria considers that our Middle East policy is so biased towards Israel that we blur any distinction between actions of terrorists and those engaged in acts of national resistance. They would cooperate with us on al-Qaeda, but not on Palestinian terrorists or not on the Lebanese Hizballah.

Second, they complain that we play down how insecure Syria and others feel in the Arab world when facing Israel, the region's superpower.

While its negotiating approach is influenced, of course, by the history of its dismemberment, that is the territorial losses it suffered between the two world wars at the hands of Britain and France, it partially explains its longstanding conviction that Israel itself was established as part of the game of imperialism to divide the Arabs. In its view Israel remains expansionist and it argues that a general Middle East peace could have been achieved long ago had the Arabs only stuck together.

Well, this year—Ambassador Burns talked about the accumulation of frustrations—our frustration, our irritation, blew up over events connected with Iraq and the war. The administration's withdrawal of its earlier objections to the Syria Accountability Act is one of the tangible signs of this current attitude. The new problems were over issues of military supplies reaching Iraq from Syria before the war and its presumed encouragement of fighters crossing the border since the war to target our troops. Intelligence is apparently mixed both on this latter issue and whether Syria received stocks of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction before the war.

Now, the President has disavowed any intent to invade Syria, but Syria is frequently described as on the wrong side of terrorism, and there is certainly an appetite for regime change in some quarters of this administration. The removal of the Saddam Hussein regime was actually a political plus for Damascus, eliminating a rival to its leadership claims in the Arab east, but a major economic loss in terms of the benefits received from discounted Iraqi oil.

What can Syria do to redirect its policies offensive to the United States? Certainly the list would include improving their border con-

trols, avoiding encouragement of fighters seeking to transit Syria for Iraq, better control over both extremist Palestinian organizations, including expelling their leaders, and ensuring that Hizballah does not trigger a major conflict with Israel. I think the Syrian leadership has been in part constrained by the presence of 400,000 Palestinians in Syria in how they treat their leaders.

What should be our policy direction? First and foremost would be to find a way to revive the peace process. Syrian anxiety at being overlooked tempts it to tolerate and perhaps even encourage the acts of Palestinian extremists and Hizballah.

Second, I would like to suggest a different way of dealing with Syrian weapons of mass destruction programs. Their extent I do not know. Certainly their chemical program has been talked of for 20 years—nothing new. But I suggest that we go beyond our rhetorical support for a Middle East region free of weapons of mass destruction to launch actual negotiations for a regional approach to their control. Our current policy is to pursue controls on a state by state basis, but excluding Israel. We have tended to assume that Israel would fiercely oppose a regional approach, preferring to avoid any discussion of its arsenal of weapons of mass destruction.

I think it is time to reexamine this in the light of what caught my attention in a recent article in the Los Angeles Times, that Israel was considering placing nuclear-tipped warheads on its missiles in its submarines. Now, the sources were anonymous, easily deniable, and they were quickly denied. But they provide a tantalizing hint that Israel just might be ready to use awareness of its arsenal in a new way.

Could this mean that it might be prepared to go beyond the position of Prime Minister Rabin in the mid-nineties, that Israel would sign the NPT 2 years after a regional peace had been achieved one that would include more than the Arab world? Verification procedures for a regional free zone would have to meet the most demanding standards. Additional U.S. bilateral guarantees of Israeli security would probably be required.

I have offered this suggestion believing that any approach that might restrain the rush throughout the region—and we have been worried sick ever since it started in South Asia and moved west—to acquire nuclear, chemical, and biological warfare capabilities should be explored. The risk of a broader conflict must always be in the minds of our policymakers. Israel's October 5 attack on the terrorist training center in Syria was warning that further actions could come and the problem could escalate. And a regional approach to arms control could also help rebuild our credentials as a dependable, fair-minded mediator in the Middle East.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Murphy follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RICHARD W. MURPHY

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your invitation to testify to the committee on the current direction of U.S. policy towards Syria.

The current state of U.S.-Syrian relations is poor and, regrettably, I see no early prospect of significant improvement. The sense of mutual frustration in Washington and Damascus is sharp, and the prospect that this will add tensions to an already highly unstable region is worrisome. Each perceives the other as deaf to its positions and neither displays much readiness to accommodate the other. The Administration

views Syria as unresponsive to its demands to curb terrorism and to cooperate fully with Washington on Iraq. Syria considers America's regional policy so biased towards Israel that it overlooks how insecure this makes Syria, and other Arab states.

The United States has played the indispensable role since the 1973 war in communicating between Syria and Israel, and at times actively mediated negotiations for an overall agreement. Many in Washington have recognized that while Damascus can be irritating and frustrating to deal with, Syria has the potential to play a key role in establishing a general peace in the region. This paradox has kept successive American presidents and secretaries of state convinced of the value in maintaining a dialogue with Damascus. For its part, Syria has consistently wanted to maintain a dialogue with Washington, despite the stormy political relationship.

The President and senior officials have disavowed any intent to invade Syria, stating that there are other ways to resolve our disagreements. However, for a variety of reasons including differences over the definition of terrorism, Lebanon, and Iraq policy, tensions between the two countries are increasing. The White House withdrawal of its earlier opposition to congressional action on the Syrian Accountability Act is a clear signal of this.

Two American initiatives could reverse the downward spiral of U.S.-Syrian relations: restarting the Arab-Israeli peace process and U.S. sponsorship of negotiations for a WMD free zone in the Middle East. Both present tough but not insuperable challenges. Without our undertaking one or both, I suspect that the American appetite for regime change in Damascus will increase, as Damascus remains obstinate because it sees few incentives to behave differently.

I. SOURCES OF SYRIAN-U.S. FRICTIONS: TERRORISM, LEBANON, IRAQ

Syrian Attitude Toward Terrorism

One of the sorest points in the U.S.-Syrian relationship has been Syria's sponsorship of groups which Washington considers terrorist. We disagree over what constitutes terrorism. Damascus considers that Washington deliberately blurs the distinction between terrorism and legitimate acts of national resistance. Thus it could fully cooperate with the U.S., for at least the first year following 9/11, against al-Qaeda, which it agreed had engaged in illegitimate attacks on innocents. But it classifies as legitimate resistance any organizations connected with the Arab-Israeli conflict. This includes the religiously inspired organizations, such as the Lebanese Hizballah militia and Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas, and the several radical secular Palestinian factions, such as the PFLP-GC. All of these have had representatives in Damascus.

Washington reportedly has evidence that operational orders have been given from these offices and that the leaders are not there just for public relations purposes as claimed. After Secretary Powell's last visit to Damascus the Syrian government closed the offices of the Palestinian factions, but the personnel involved continue to live in Syria. The Syrian government has said that these individuals cannot be expelled because they have no place to go.

Israel's October 5 attack on what it called a terrorist training site a dozen or so miles from Damascus was its first attack on Syrian territory since 1973. There was no Syrian military reaction. President Bashar Al-Asad said that "what happened will only make Syria's role more effective and influential in events in the region . . ." Was this a threat of a Syrian reply through proxies such as Hizballah and Palestinian extremists? It may simply have been his way of acknowledging Syria's own incapacity for any meaningful military reply. Its military strength has eroded; its principal arms supplier, the USSR, is no more; and no supplier is interested in extending Syria credit for arms.

Administration officials have noted pointedly that Syria is "on the wrong side" of the war against terrorism, and have implied serious consequences if Syria does not change its behavior. Influential advocates of action against Syria outside the Administration have publicly urged the "roll back", (words which presumably mean "overthrow") of the Syrian regime. These threats have pushed Syria off balance and may explain its decision to soft pedal the deep penetration by U.S. forces into Syria in hot pursuit of a convoy of trucks last June, and our subsequent detention for several days of Syrian border guards.

Lebanon

The Syrian military presence in Lebanon is an older bone of contention. The U.S. first criticized Syria's military presence in Lebanon in 1982, using a formula calling for the departure from Lebanon of "all foreign forces," i.e. Syrian and Israeli. In 2000 when Israel pulled its own forces out from its eighteen year occupation of southern Lebanon, America did not immediately demand that Syria do the same.

In part this was because doubts have persisted in some quarters in Beirut and Washington that Lebanon, in the aftermath of its long civil war, could afford to dispense with the Syrian military presence. For its part Syria consistently defended its presence as one invited by Lebanon in 1975, and also as necessary for Syria's own security, citing the threat to Syria posed by Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon. Secretary of State Powell in March revived the demand that Syria remove all its forces from Lebanon. In language not generally used by the Secretary concerning that situation, Powell called for Damascus to end its "occupation."

Iraq

A further friction developed just as the Bush Administration was entering office. Syria began to test a new pipeline from Iraq, connecting with a long disused pipeline across Syria, to the Mediterranean. Washington protested that this was breaking the UN sanctions, which only allowed the export of Iraqi oil under the UN "Oil for Food" program. Syria disingenuously replied that it was only testing the pipeline, asking in any case why Washington was permitting both Jordan and Turkey to benefit economically from Iraqi oil while coming down hard on Syria.

Last spring, Washington's frustrations with Syria exploded into sharp anger as it charged Damascus with continuing to allow shipment of military materiel to Iraq, a traffic which the U.S. had urged it to stop for at least a year prior to the Iraqi war. In post-war Iraq, Washington has also accused Syria of allowing infiltration of jihadis from Syria and other Arab and Muslim countries to target American and other coalition forces, and pressed Syria to return official Iraqi bank balances.

II. SYRIAN EFFORTS TO DEVELOP WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

Damascus probably has missile warheads loaded with chemicals and a large stockpile of missiles. This has been talked about for at least the past fifteen years. Some years back Israeli intelligence privately acknowledged that this Syrian capability has probably been developed for defensive, not offensive, purposes. Syria may also have researched biological weapons, but less is known of this program. The United States has criticized Syria's chemical and biological weapons programs and some assert that it is seeking nuclear weapons.

Syria scoffs at the American view that the Arabs have nothing to fear from Israeli possession of WMD, but that Israel has everything to fear from their possessing WMD. Syria stresses that it has real security concerns vis-a-vis Israel.

III. SYRIA'S UNEASY RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS

Syrian orators often recall the memory of their capital's past glories. They describe Damascus as the leader of the Arab East and superior, morally at least, to most of the Arab World. Their leaders used to attack the behavior of other Arab leaders such as Egypt's Sadat and Jordan's King Hussein for weakening Arab Unity through engaging in unilateral negotiations with Israel. Syria has consistently maintained that a general and lasting Arab-Israeli peace could have been achieved much earlier had Arab ranks remained united. They proudly contrasted Syria's preservation of a "principled position of steadfastness" with Egyptian and Jordanian "betrayal of Arab Unity." The fact that Sadat achieved through negotiations the return of all of Egypt's territory occupied by Israel in 1967, and not through "steadfastness" but rather through a more practical bargaining position, is an awkward and unmentioned fact. This assertion that Syria always takes a principled stand understandably galls other Arabs.

Damascus has long viewed its neighbors in Lebanon and Jordan as somehow less legitimate entities than Syria, even in its truncated condition caused by its loss of territory engineered by France and Britain after the First World War. This mindset has led Syria to reject proposals to exchange embassies with Lebanon ever since Syrian and Lebanese independence in 1946, and to its readiness in the eighties to engage in activities destabilizing to Jordan.

Syria respects Israel's military might and has chosen not to join battle with Israel since 1973. Historians one day may find evidence that in his collaboration with President Anwar Sadat in their surprise attack on Israel in 1973, President Hafez Al-Asad shared the same assumption as the Egyptian leader: the war aimed at a political, not a military, "victory"; something had to be done to bring the Arab-Israeli stalemate to world attention; and the United States needed a push to restart negotiations for its resolution. This worked out well for Egypt, which achieved a full return of its territory. But Israel showed no interest in continuing to negotiate with Syria after its first disengagement agreement in 1974. Israel preferred, as Abba Eban once said, to focus on making peace with Egypt, the country that could make war.

Perhaps because it has throughout history experienced foreign meddling in its neighborhood, Damascus has tended to see the establishment of Israel as just another move by the West to establish a bridgehead to divide and weaken the Arabs. Damascus has never understood the passion behind the logic of Zionism. Syrians from all walks of life have long enjoyed repeating the myth that over the front entrance of the Knesset in Jerusalem is the inscription "From the Nile to the Euphrates," signifying Zionism's expansionist aims. Throughout the eighties Hafez Al-Asad said he saw no differences between Israeli political leaders who in his opinion were all committed to expanding Israel's territorial limits, a goal which he was determined to do everything in his power to prevent.

While asserting that Arab Unity must be the primary goal of all Arabs, Damascus keeps a close eye on Syria's national interests. When Hafez Al-Asad, Syria's President from 1970 to 2000, disagreed with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in the seventies, he did not hesitate, despite wide Arab World support for Arafat, to set up a rival Palestinian civil and military leadership. Similarly in 1975 Al-Asad came to the help of Lebanon's Maronite President when he was asked to send troops to fight the Palestinians. In 1983 Syrian artillery fired on Arafat's forces in Tripoli, Lebanon.

On another front, Al-Asad found it expedient to cooperate with Shiite Iran beginning in 1982, in supporting the creation and subsequent training and funding of the Shiite Hizballah militia in Lebanon. That was the same year in which he brutally suppressed a religiously based Syrian organization, the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood. Some have explained his readiness to work with Iran as reflecting his uneasiness at being a member of Syria's minority Alawite community, long treated as second class by the majority Sunni population. It is just as likely that he was comfortable working with any force, whether secular or religious, which bolstered Syria's leadership at home and in the region.

IV. IMPACT OF THE U.S. OCCUPATION OF IRAQ ON SYRIA

The removal of Saddam's regime is a political gain for Syria. Forgotten amid the welter of accusations leveled against Damascus today is the fact that for 30 years Al-Asad and Saddam were political rivals and occasional enemies.

But the elimination of Saddam's regime proved costly. The war brought an immediate shutdown of the oil pipeline between the two countries. Syria had been profiting by as much as \$1 billion a year through importing heavily discounted Iraqi oil for its domestic consumption and exporting its own production at world prices. This revenue source is unlikely to resume.

There are no reliable Iraqi-Syria trade statistics, but over the past five years Iraq became an increasingly important market for Syrian exporters. Baghdad presumably wanted to reward the Syrian government for its cooperation on arms supply, and favored Syrian merchants for contracts under the UN "Oil for Food" program.

One irony of the post-war situation is that while the United States Congress has been debating the Syrian Accountability Act, which includes the option of applying rigorous economic sanctions, the U.S. military in Iraq has encouraged Syrian exports to Iraq. It has authorized, for example, purchases of Syrian propane gas for Iraqi households, and allowed power swaps between northern Syria and the city of Mosul. In a demonstration of Syrian entrepreneurial skills, the volume of trade in "white" consumer goods between Syrian factories and its trading companies and the Iraqi market, has steadily increased. American investment, outside of three companies operating in the energy sector, remains minimal. The two way trade between the United States and Syria is just over the \$300 million level.

Syria has not made it easy for foreign investors and it has failed to unleash the energies and talents of its own business community. In part this probably reflects the Ba'ath Party's doctrinal suspicion of businessmen in general and its view that all outsiders are out to exploit Syria and provide no benefit in return. Today the Syrian economy is sluggish. The decision of President Bashar Al-Asad in his first year in office to privatize the banking industry, a surprising challenge to long-standing Ba'ath party doctrine, has yet to have a practical result.

V. PAST ACTIONS TO INFLUENCE SYRIAN POLICY

Syria, in common with most countries, responds to both carrots and sticks. The close cooperation developed by Henry Kissinger with Al-Asad in 1974 produced the Golan disengagement. Syria has fully respected the terms of that agreement for 30 years: there has been no infiltration or other provocations launched against Israel from that sector.

As for its responding to sticks, there is the memorable example set by Turkey in 1998. Long frustrated by Syria's harboring of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, Ankara

thereupon demanded his expulsion and moved its army to the border. Damascus expelled Ocalan and he was finally seized by Turkish agents in Kenya.

Israel's October 5 attack on a Syrian site was chosen to send a political message, not to kill Syrians. It is reasonable to assume, however, that if Israel traces any terrorist acts as having been directly ordered from Damascus by Palestinian groups located there, or if there is a major revival of Hizballah attacks across the Lebanese-Israeli border, the Sharon government may decide to repeat its message against Syria on a broader scale. The consequences of that decision are unpredictable. It is probable that at some point the Syrian leadership will feel obliged to find a way to reply and risk a broader conflict in the region. That is, what Bashar Al-Asad will "understand" from the Israeli use of force, will be his need to respond in kind.

VI. OPTIONS FOR U.S. POLICY. SANCTIONS? PEACE PROCESS? WMD FREE ZONE?

The Syria Accountability Act contains a provision for broad economic sanctions on Syria. Given the limited U.S.-Syrian trade and investment, our leverage is small. Washington could urge Syria's neighbors to cut off their trading links with Syria, but they probably would be unwilling to do so. The United States should reflect on the wisdom of cutting trade in light of the harm done to the Iraqi population, but not its leadership, during the thirteen years of U.N. sanctions against that country.

Does Syria feel enough pressure, or sense sufficient rewards ahead to comply with Washington's demands to expel known Palestinian extremist leaders, assure that Hizballah will continue to avoid provocative cross border actions, and to close its borders more effectively to jihadis seeking a holy war against American forces in Iraq?

Syria may find it in its interests to do some of the above. Any public action taken by Damascus against Palestinians, however, carries some risk for Syria; it could negatively affect its 400,000 resident Palestinians. This could be a problem for Syria given the current stalemate in the peace process.

Syria would unquestionably like to be part of a reinvigorated peace effort. It is as anxious today as ever that its interests not be overlooked and sees that best achieved through a revival of negotiations under the peace process. Unfortunately, there seems little early prospect of renewed U.S. activity in terms of Israeli-Palestinian talks and none affecting the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks.

There should be attention given to the question of whether it would serve America's regional interests to sponsor negotiations for a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Current American policy is to treat each nation's WMD programs, Israel excepted, as a separate problem and to threaten, or persuade each country in turn, to stop such programs. Since Pakistan and India carried out their atomic tests in 1998, the pace of proliferation has increased. We have fought a war with Iraq because of its programs. We view with alarm Iran's alleged efforts to develop nuclear weapons and Syria's pursuit of WMD. The rumored Saudi interest in acquiring nuclear technology from Pakistan is disquieting. This is not a country by country problem, but a larger challenge facing the United States and the entire region.

The conventional wisdom in Washington seems to be that it would be bad policy, not to mention bad politics, to go beyond a rhetorical call for a Middle East free of WMD. The problems of verification in the region are described as virtually insuperable. Of at least equal importance, it is said that any such effort would bring Washington into an unproductive, head on confrontation with Israel.

True, Israel has usually shied away from any discussion of its own WMD arsenal. Usually, that is, but not always. In 1995 Israeli Foreign Minister Peres stated Israel's readiness to sign the NPT two years after a regional peace agreement. The nuclear issue was raised but quickly cut off in a Knesset debate in 2000. However, on October 12, 2003, the Los Angeles Times published an extraordinary story by its reporter Douglas Frantz in which he described leaks by senior Israeli and American officials about outfitting Israeli submarines with nuclear tipped missiles. This was described as a signal to Iran of Israeli determination not to allow an Iranian nuclear weapons program to proceed.

This indication of a new willingness by Israeli sources not only to acknowledge their country's possession of a nuclear arsenal but to describe its potential use raises the question of whether Israel would balk at an American initiative to engage it in negotiations for a region free of WMD. Even though Frantz's Israeli sources claimed anonymity, and the leaks he reported were therefore officially deniable, the story is a hint that Israel may be rethinking how to use its possession of WMD as deterrence. Clearly verification procedures of a WMD free zone would have to meet the most demanding standards. Guarantees of Israeli security through peace agreements, together with bilateral US commitments, would be required. But any ap-

proach which might restrain the rush to acquire nuclear, chemical and biological warfare capabilities in the volatile Middle East should be explored. It would also help to rebuild American credentials as a dependable mediator in the Middle East if Washington were to lead regional negotiations on WMD.

In sum, despite all of the historical baggage which burdens the U.S.-Syrian dialogue, there are a few steps we each can take to improve the relationship, to calm rising tensions and to avoid a broader war.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Ambassador Murphy.
The chair would like to recognize now Dr. Murhaf Jouejati.

STATEMENT OF MURHAF JOUEJATI, PH.D., ADJUNCT PROFESSOR, GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY, AND ADJUNCT SCHOLAR, MIDDLE EAST INSTITUTE

Dr. JOUEJATI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much for inviting me to be here today.

What brings me here also is a love for my native Syria and my love for my being a U.S. citizen, of which I am very proud. This love for the two, though, is mixed with a lot of frustration, all the more so that I think the U.S. and Syria have really at the end of the day the same objectives, which is peace and stability in the Middle East.

What I will do here, again since it is in my written testimony, I will just gloss over and in very general terms, in the hope that we can get to specifics in the question and answer session. Before I do, may I just correct just a few misconceptions that I have heard this morning.

Certainly, with respect to the Syrian economy, Syria is gradually liberalizing its economy. Syria seeks membership in the WTO. Syria has several free trade agreements with numerous Arab countries and Syria is currently negotiating with the EU to become an associate partner in the year 2010.

Yes, there are U.S.-Syrian tensions. Certainly there are U.S.-Syrian tensions, but I think these have first and foremost to do with the Arab-Israeli conflict and, as Senator Boxer said earlier, the truth will set you free. I think it has to do with U.S. support to Israel despite Israel's continued occupation of Arab territories and this despite the United Nations resolutions.

We explored what is wrong with the Syrian approach. Let us, if I may, let us also explore what may be wrong with the U.S. approach towards Syria. When we in the United States use the old stick approach with Syria, the best we can get is halfhearted cooperation. This is true in Lebanon and, although there has been to date four redeployments of Syrian troops, although Syria has kept the peace in Lebanon for quite a long time, although Syria has put the lid on Palestinian fighters in Palestinian refugee camps and also curtailed Hizballah activities in the south of Lebanon, Syria needs to withdraw from Lebanon. So it is a halfhearted cooperation.

In Iraq there is Syrian cooperation with the United States and this General Petraeus can talk more about it than I. Syria is, for example, supplying electricity to the north of Iraq, specifically Mosul. We can talk also to Sir Jeremy Greenstock, who is the top British official in the U.S. occupation authority in Iraq, who has very recently said that he was astounded by Syrian cooperation. But there too we have a problem with Syria. Yes, Syria did—or at

least there was smuggling across the border of night vision equipment, and so on.

With terrorism we have a major problem. Part of the problem is that Syria and the Arab world and the third world at large simply do not see it the way we see it, this question of Palestinian, quote unquote, "terrorism" when the Palestinians are defending their legitimate rights to determine their future.

But on the question of terrorism—here the distinction becomes very clear—Syria has been probably one of the closest partners with the United States in the war against al-Qaeda, so much so that senior American officials, including this morning, have said that Syria has saved American lives.

By using the stick, Mr. Chairman, we are unwittingly delaying the reforms in Syria that we are hoping for. We are unwittingly uniting the new guard and the old guard, and there is, there is that division in Syria between new guard and old guard, and as we are applying the stick to Syria this can only bring them together in fear. We are uniting the state and society, whereas there was a gap between state and society, and society now increasingly is increasingly vocal in demanding change in Syria.

By applying pressure to Syria, which is seen on the Syrian street as doing Israel's bidding, it is only delaying that movement of democratization. The case in point of the U.S. stick delaying reforms in Syria is the very recent cabinet reshuffle in Syria, in which President Asad wanted to make major changes, including the appointment of a non-Ba'athi prime minister, a man who is the president of the Damascus chamber of commerce. According to my information, President Asad wanted to overhaul the whole foreign policy apparatus. But this had not been done at the end of the day and he appointed again an old guardist in order not to seem or to give the appearance that he is bowing to American pressure.

Furthermore, using the stick against Syria is going to further aggravate Arab public opinion, which is already very inflamed at our unconditional support to Israel and our occupation of Iraq. It is going to give, this stick against Syria, to give further munition to Islamic fundamentalists. Again, the Syria Accountability Act is going to be seen as the U.S. doing Israel's war against Arabs and Moslems.

Finally, that stick against Syria and that anti-Syrian rhetoric that is coming out of Washington is going to—and I hope not, but—to bring the Middle East to the precipice. The case in point is that this has encouraged Israel to strike deep inside Syria, as it had on October 5th. And although Syria was restrained, the Israelis have threatened more strikes, at which point I think Bashar Asad would be under tremendous pressure to reply in kind, and this will set off a spiral of violence that we will not be able to control.

Mr. Chairman, if we want Syria's total cooperation we can get it. All we need to do is to convince Syria that its security interests are not threatened, this not only with word but by deeds. This entails the resumption of the Middle East peace process based on Resolution 242, based on the Saudi plan, which all the Arab states have accepted and which the U.S. has endorsed.

Then when the U.S. uses the stick with the recalcitrants, either Arab or Israeli, then we might move the region toward peace. Then

there will be no more terror. Then we will be doing Israel a favor as its security policy has failed. Then we will do Syria and the Arabs a favor and, most of all, Mr. Chairman, we will be doing ourselves a favor.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Jouejati follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. MURHAF JOUEJATI

Summary: The recent tension in the U.S.-Syrian relationship must be viewed in the context of Syria's opposition to the U.S. war against Iraq. Syria's anti-war stance stems not out of love for the Saddam regime but because Damascus opposes unilateral action in general and fears encirclement by American power in particular.

To be sure, Washington's displeasure is not confined to Syria's anti-war stance. It has to do with broader concerns regarding Syria's external action, including alleged Syrian support of terrorism, efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction, and the destabilization of its neighbors.

The aim of this essay is to show that these concerns are inaccurate and that the persistence of Washington's aggressive approach toward Syria may impede rather than advance the U.S. national interest.

Syria and Terrorism

With regard to the claim that Syria harbors terrorist organizations, Syria indeed hosts a number of militant Palestinian organizations that Washington considers "terrorist" but that Syria, together with other Arab and developing countries, regards as "freedom fighters." Therein lies the greatest irritant in U.S.-Syrian relations. Syria provides these groups safe haven because it believes in their legitimate right to resist Israel's illegal occupation of their land.

While there is no evidence to support the claim that Syria provides material or financial assistance to these groups, the hypothesis according to which Syria allows them to engage in business and other money-making activities to finance and sustain their operations is plausible.

But this state of affairs seems to have changed following the meeting a few months ago between Secretary of State Colin Powell and Syrian President Bashar Asad in Damascus. Many reports indicate that Syrian authorities satisfied Washington's demand of shutting down Palestinian operations in Syria. More precisely, leaders of the Syria-based militant Palestinian groups moved out of Syria (into neighboring Lebanon) voluntarily in order to alleviate the anti-Syrian pressures emanating from Washington. Whether the closure of their offices is temporary or permanent is not altogether clear. What is clear however, is that whether militant Palestinian groups maintain offices in Damascus or not neither bolsters nor diminishes their ability to resist Israel's military occupation of their land.

At any rate, Syria has consistently prohibited militant Palestinian groups the use of its territory to launch military attacks against Israel, and this since 1970. This policy is part and parcel of Syria's broader policy of scrupulously adhering to the terms of the disengagement and cease-fire agreements with Israel that former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger brokered in 1974. Other than militant Palestinian groups, Syria does not permit any politically-motivated organization to operate on its soil.

With regard to Hizballah, Syria maintains relations with that group from a distance. There are no known Hizballah offices, training camps, or military bases in Syria. Hizballah operates from bases in the south of Lebanon. However, although Syrian officials deny providing Hizballah other than moral support, evidence suggests that Syria has served on occasion as a conduit for Hizballah-bound arms and equipment supplied by Iran.

Having said that, while Syria has some influence over Hizballah (Damascus can cut-off the supply route at will), the degree of that influence is exaggerated. Hizballah enjoys a fairly high degree of autonomy. At any rate, Iranian influence over Hizballah seems to be greater than that of Syria.

In sum, although Syria harbors groups that Washington considers "terrorist," Syrian support is largely of a symbolic nature. To assert, therefore, that Syria supports terrorism is highly inaccurate, especially that, since 9/11 to date, Syria has been one of Washington's closest partners in the war against international terrorism:

- Syria has been "completely cooperative" in investigating al-Qaeda and persons associated with that organization, according to a senior CIA official. That co-

operation was highlighted by the revelation last year that Syria “saved American lives,” according to Richard W. Erdman, the chief State Department specialist for Syria. Indeed, Syrian security services tipped off the CIA of an impending al-Qaeda attack against the administrative unit of the fifth fleet headquarters in Bahrain. If successful, that operation would have killed a large number of American troops.

- Syrian intelligence tipped off Canadian and U.S. authorities of a planned al-Qaeda attack against a U.S. target in Canada.
- Syrian cooperation was also highlighted by an earlier revelation that a key figure in the September 11 plot, Mohammad Haydar Zammar, had been arrested in Morocco and sent to Syria for interrogation, with American knowledge. Although U.S. officials have not interrogated Zammar directly, Americans have submitted questions to the Syrians who have in turn relayed Zammar’s responses to the CIA.
- Damascus provided information on September 11 hijacker Mohammed Atta, an Egyptian citizen who worked on an engineering project in the northern Syrian city of Aleppo in the mid-1990s. Damascus also supplied information on Ma’mun Darkazanli, a Syrian businessman who allegedly served as a financial conduit to al-Qaeda members and prayed in the same mosque in Hamburg, Germany, as did Atta and Marwan al-Shehhi, who piloted the hijacked planes that blew up the World Trade Center. Darkazanli also allegedly managed the bank accounts of Mamdouh Salim, a top al-Qaeda member awaiting trial in the U.S. on charges of participating in the 1998 bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa.
- Syrian officials have avoided arresting certain suspects so they can continue to monitor their conversations and movements and report back to the United States.

Syria’s war against al-Qaeda underscores the distinction Damascus makes between terrorist groups and national resistance movements. An impartial verdict as to whether Syria is a state sponsor of terrorism must await an international consensus over this definitional problem.

Syria and WMD

With regard to the claim that Syria is developing weapons of mass destruction, that program dates back to the 1980s as part of the late Hafez Asad’s policy of reaching strategic parity with Israel, a state whose nuclear stockpile includes over three hundred nuclear warheads. From his perspective, maintaining a balance of power with Israel in that field, no matter how lopsided, is the best guarantee to maintain quiet along the Golan front.

Having said that, Syria’s arsenal of chemical and biological weapons is said to be too insignificant to pose a threat to U.S. interests in the region. According to the internationally renowned military analyst Anthony Cordesman, Syria’s WMD program is “silly.”

At any rate, Washington must support Syria’s recent proposal to the United Nations to ban non-conventional weapons throughout the Middle East, not oppose it as it has in recent times.

Syria: a Destabilizing Factor?

With regard to the claim that Syria is a “destabilizing” factor in the Middle East, the evidence suggests the opposite:

- As mentioned above, Syria has scrupulously adhered to the 1974 cease-fire agreement with Israel along the Israel-occupied Golan front;
- Syria’s military presence in Lebanon helped end the Lebanese civil war. Syria restored peace in that country by disarming all local militias (except Hizballah). Although, as mentioned above, Syria has limited influence over Hizballah, Syria’s military presence in Lebanon helps curtail the activities of that group in the south of Lebanon. It also keeps the lid on armed elements in Palestinian refugee camps in that country.

At any rate, given the overall improvement in the security situation in Lebanon over the past few years and the expansion in the size of Lebanon’s armed forces, Syria, in keeping with the Ta’if accords and in coordination with Lebanese authorities, has, to date carried out four redeployments.

- With regard to the infiltration of jihadists into Iraq, a top British official said recently that Syria and Iran, accused by some U.S. officials of subverting efforts to stabilize and rebuild Iraq, had in fact been cooperative. Sir Jeremy Greenstock, the most senior British official in the U.S.-led occupying adminis-

tration, said a dialogue was under way with Damascus and Tehran to encourage them to back more openly the postwar drive to create a new Iraq. "I think on the whole that they have been quite cooperative," said Greenstock, Britain's former ambassador to the United Nations, when asked if Syria and Iran were actively trying to destabilize Iraq.

In the same vein, Gen. David Petraeus, Commander of the 101st Airborne division, acknowledged Syria's cooperation. Syria is providing electricity to northern Iraq, especially the city of Mosul, from its own electricity grid. Gen. Petraeus also lauded Syrian efforts to curb the infiltration of jihadists into Iraq despite Syria's limited resources. Although Syria can not prevent all fighters from slipping across the long, porous border with Iraq, Syria is doing everything it can. According to Syria's Foreign Minister, "We have tightened our checkpoints and are turning people back. But the border is long and we cannot cover it all."

In sum, the characterization of Syria as a "destabilizing" force in the Middle East does not fit the evidence.

The U.S. Approach

In light of the above, the approach that Washington adopted vis-a-vis Syria is the wrong approach, and this for several reasons. First, the U.S. is unwittingly undermining the reforms that were taking shape in Syria before the war on Iraq. Just as Bashar Asad's reformist team was beginning to gain ground in the new guard/old guard competition, U.S. pressure came to unite the two camps.

The new cabinet that Asad put in place in mid-September is one case in point. Asad decreed the separation of the Ba'ath Party from the state and its day-to-day operations and was in the process of engineering the formation of a technocratic government. Asad planned to invite Rateb Shallah, the U.S.-educated president of the powerful Damascus Chamber of Commerce, to form a new government. The choice of Shallah made sense given the latter's important Washington connections and close ties to the international business community. Asad also wanted to overhaul the foreign policy apparatus by removing Farouk al-Shara—Syria's staunchly anti-U.S. foreign minister—and replacing him with his deputy, Walid Mouallem, a professional diplomat who commands considerable respect in Washington. Asad also intended to remove the veteran Defense Minister Mustafa Tlas, and to replace him with Army Chief of Staff Lt. General Hassan Turkmani.

Although the decision to make important personnel changes was meant to improve the standing of his regime in U.S. eyes, it was also meant to satisfy Syria's domestic needs: Asad had become increasingly frustrated with the slow pace of the economic and administrative reforms that he had promised upon assuming power three years ago. Although the outgoing government instituted several important measures, including the establishment of private banks and private universities, it had done little to arrest the declining quality of life of the average citizen.

But against the background of Washington's saber rattling and unsubtle hints regarding de-Ba'athification, Asad, in a last-minute decision, scrapped his list of ministerial candidates and instead, called on an "old-guardist," Naji al-Otari, the 59-year-old parliamentary speaker to head the new cabinet. Asad was concerned with appearing as bowing to U.S. pressures. This underscores what I have written elsewhere:

If the U.S. continues to exert pressure against Syria, it risks having Syria run in the other direction. A historical analysis of Syria's behavior shows that external pressure against Syria does not always work. When Syria feels the heat, it generally runs in the other direction. The U.S.-Israel strategic alliance in the early 1980s pushed Damascus into the Soviet embrace. The Turkish-Israeli alliance of 1996 drew Syria closer to Iraq.

Second, as a result of mounting U.S. pressure and anti-Syrian rhetoric, Washington unwittingly bridged the gap between the state and society in Syria. Given Syrian society's intense Arab nationalist sentiment, and given popular mistrust of U.S. intentions (in large part due to unconditional U.S. support of Israel), the state-society gap (which helped advance the cause of democratization by pushing the state towards reform) has narrowed, further weakening the emerging civil rights movement.

Third, continued U.S. pressure against Syria threatens to further alienate the broader Arab public. Moreover, it plays into the hands of radical Islamic fundamentalists who can now point to the threat of U.S. sanctions against Syria as further evidence that the U.S. is carrying out Israel's war against Arabs and Muslims.

Finally, by persisting in its pressure against Syria, the U.S. might precipitate unintended consequences. Washington's tough anti-Syrian rhetoric has emboldened

Israel, Syria's arch nemesis. Israel's October 5 air strike deep into Syrian territory would probably not have taken place had it not been for Israel's impression that it had Washington's "green light." President Bush's tacit approval of that air strike may have made matters worse: Following his statement that Israel need not feel constrained in defending itself, Israel threatened Syria with further military action, in which case the Asad regime is likely to retaliate despite its inferior military position vis-a-vis Israel, a move that, in turn, might unleash Israel's vastly superior force against Syria and/or Lebanon.

Conclusion

In sum, in its attempt to bring Syria to heel, the intense pressure that Washington is applying against Syria threatens Syrian cooperation against al-Qaeda and in Iraq. Another unintended consequence is that Washington might inadvertently thwart Bashar Asad's efforts to reform Syria, threatening in the process the small gains that the civil rights movement in Syria has made in the past three years. In addition, the U.S. risks further alienating the Arab and Islamic worlds, and, more importantly, might bring the Middle East to the precipice.

A wiser course would be to emulate the British approach vis-a-vis Syria, one that engages Damascus through dialogue. Specifically, Washington must seize on the above mentioned instances of Syrian cooperation in Iraq by proposing, among other things, to carry out joint U.S.-Syrian patrols along the Syrian-Iraqi border.

In the longer term, Washington will obtain total Syrian cooperation, not only in Iraq, but in the Middle East at large, if it engages in a balanced approach to peace-making in the Middle East. In this regard, Washington needs to show that it is determined to help solve the Arab-Israeli conflict, first, by including Syria and Lebanon in its current attempts to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli dispute, and second, by demonstrating that Washington expects the parties to the conflict, including Israel, to abide by the terms of UN Security Council land-for-peace Resolutions. According to senior Syrian officials, if Israel were made to implement its share of the land-for-peace equation, namely the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories it occupied in June 1967, Syria would, in addition to normalizing diplomatic and other relations with the Jewish state, disband all anti-Israel groups. In the final analysis, is it not these twin objectives—peace in the Middle East and the end of terrorism that the U.S. is aiming for?

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you very much, Dr. Jouejati.
Mr. Leverett.

**STATEMENT OF FLYNT L. LEVERETT, PH.D., VISITING FELLOW,
SABAN CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES, BROOKINGS IN-
STITUTION**

Dr. LEVERETT. Mr. Chairman, like the other members of the panel, I have submitted my full statement for the record. I will just touch on a few points here.

I would submit that today the United States does not really have a policy toward Syria if by policy we mean a series of measures and initiatives rooted in a strategy for changing Syrian behaviors that are inimical to our interests and eliciting more constructive behavior from the Syrian regime.

Let me very briefly put a little bit of historical perspective on that. During the 90's, from the Madrid Conference in 1991 until the summit between President Clinton and the late Hafez Al-Asad in March 2000, the way that we thought about a strategy toward Syria was in the context of the Syrian track of the Middle East peace process. It was assumed that once we got Syria and Israel to do the deal that all of our bilateral concerns with Syria, particularly those related to its state sponsorship of terrorism, would be taken care of in the context of that agreement.

But of course, that agreement never came, and with the effective collapse of the Syria track in 2000 we have been left adrift in our policy toward Syria without a strategy, without a sense of how to accomplish what it is we want to accomplish with Syria.

I would suggest that—and I would respectfully disagree with Ambassador Murphy and Dr. Jouejati on this—that it is a mistake to make the basis for a new strategy toward Syria a resumption of the Syrian track of the Middle East peace process. As important as I think that a peace between Syria and Israel would be for the region and for U.S. interests in the region, the reality is that we are not going to have a meaningful Syria track any time soon. Given what else is going on in the region, given the composition and the positions of the present Israeli government, we are not soon going to be able to restart the Syria track on terms that would have any meaning for the Syrian regime.

I think what we need is a strategy that will let us accomplish our policy goals toward Syria without waiting for a climate that is more conducive to a resumption of the Syria track.

I would pick up on something that Patrick Clawson said. We need both bigger sticks and bigger carrots with regard to Syria if we are going to construct such a strategy. There has been a lot of discussion of sticks with regard to Syria. The Syria Accountability Act is very much oriented in that direction. I do not hear very much discussion nowadays about carrots for Syria and I think that is a serious deficiency in the policy debate right now.

If we are not willing to talk with specificity about the carrots as well as the sticks, we are never really going to be able to modify Syrian behavior. Both when I was in government and even more since I have left government and in some ways am able to speak more freely with Syrians and others in the region, the consistent message that I hear from Syria with regard to our policy differences with the regime in Damascus is: You keep telling us you want us to change our behavior, but you will not tell us what is in it for us if we do.

I think we should make it clear both what is in it for Syria if it behaves more constructively and what will happen to them if they do not behave more constructively. Let me suggest a couple of areas and how this approach might work in those areas.

With regard to terrorism and Syria's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism, that designation is eminently justified by the record of Syrian behavior. But all we do, frankly, in terms of engaging Syria on this is to reiterate over and over the same list of complaints and tell them we want them to stop.

I think we need to create—to use a word that has been taken over for other purposes, but I will use it here—we need a road map for Syria on the terrorism issue. We should be very clear that we want them to do specific steps—expel these leaders, close these offices, stop these activities—but also indicate that if they were to do those things in a way that was verifiable and we were confident they had done them, that we would be prepared to take Syria off the state sponsors list because at that point Syria would effectively be out of the terrorism business as far as the United States was concerned. We need to use both carrots and sticks.

Similarly, on getting them to take a more cooperative stance toward what we are doing in Iraq, I could not agree more with Senator Biden's suggestion that what we need is an analogue to the six plus two framework that was, I think, very, very helpful to us

in late 2001, early 2002, in dealing with Afghanistan. We need an analogue for that with regard to Iraq.

I think that would be good for our own interests in Iraq, but in the context of today's topic I think it would be an important way of reassuring the Syrians that what we are doing in Iraq is not directed against their interests and that in fact their regional interests could be accommodated in what we are trying to do in Iraq. Again, we need both carrots and sticks.

With regard to the Syria Accountability Act, I certainly welcome and encourage the efforts to put a national security waiver in. I think if people are looking for other ways to increase the range of flexibility that is granted to the executive in implementing the act, assuming that it passes, I would also consider putting in sunset provisions with the various measures, put in a time limit, so that at the end of the time limit the executive and the Congress are going to have to revisit the situation and see if these kinds of measures are still appropriate.

Will such an approach, the kind of approach I have suggested, really work with the Syrians, particularly given some of the things that we have heard about Bashar Al-Asad today? I think that there are a number of competing images of Bashar Al-Asad in public discourse about Syria today. You heard one from Patrick Clawson: Bashar is essentially the loyal son of the regime, may in fact be even more ideological, more anti-American in his orientation than his late father.

You have heard another from Mr. Jouejati, that Bashar is someone who really does want to take Syria in a more constructive direction, but is hemmed in by an old guard. Particularly in Israeli analytic circles, you hear a third view: Bashar is simply inexperienced, not up to the job, does not really know what he is doing.

I could argue the case for any one of those three views of Bashar with a sort of selective application of evidence. I think that what this suggests is that Bashar's situation is very, very complicated and that if we are going to engage him, if we are going to get anything more than tactical adjustments in Syrian behavior, we are going to have to be very clear, very explicit, about what we want him to do, but also very clear about both rewards and benefits, depending on the choices that he makes.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Leverett follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. FLYNT LEVERETT

Mr. Chairman, Senator Biden, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about an important and timely issue in U.S. Middle East policy: how to deal with Syria. I have been involved with U.S. policymaking toward Syria for almost a decade—as a senior analyst at the Central Intelligence Agency, on the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, as a Senior Director for Middle East Affairs at the National Security Council, and, now, as an analyst and commentator in the think-tank world. I hope that, on the basis of this experience, I might offer the Committee some perspective on current difficulties in U.S.-Syrian relations.

The source of these difficulties, I believe, is a serious policy vacuum toward Syria. Because of this vacuum, we have no way to resolve our outstanding differences with Syria, such as its longstanding support for Palestinian terrorist organizations and Lebanese Hizballah, its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, its hegemonic posi-

tion in Lebanon, and more recently, its efforts to undermine U.S. policy goals in Iraq.

Let me put this argument in historical perspective. For almost a decade, from the Madrid conference in 1991 until 2000, successive Republican and Democratic administrations thought about engaging Syria primarily in the context of the Syrian track of the Arab-Israeli peace process. In this approach, our outstanding bilateral differences were to be resolved as part of a peace settlement between Israel and Syria. For example, it was generally understood that, as part of such a settlement, Syria would have no need for and would sever its ties to Palestinian rejectionists and disarm Hizballah fighters in southern Lebanon. Similarly, Syria's pursuit of WMD would be put into a less threatening and ultimately more soluble context.

Of course, the peace treaty between Israel and Syria that U.S. mediators worked so hard to facilitate never came. Moreover, in a six-month period in 2000, the underpinnings of the U.S. approach to the Syrian track and the management of the U.S.-Syrian relationship disappeared.

- In March of that year, the failure of the Clinton-Asad summit in Geneva marked the collapse of the Syrian track.
- Two months later, in May, the IDF withdrew from southern Lebanon.
- A month after that, Syrian President Hafez al Asad died and was succeeded by his son, Bashar.
- In September, the *intifada al Aqsa* began.

As a result of these events, the Bush administration came to office with no inherited operational framework for policy toward Syria. A year later, in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, President Bush launched our war on terror. Syria, under Dr. Bashar's leadership, offered the United States intelligence cooperation against Al Qaida and related groups, but did nothing to reverse its own terrorist ties. In the context of a global war on terror, Syria's status as a state sponsor of terrorism pursuing WMD capabilities has become a source of increasing friction between Washington and Damascus. Moreover, in light of the ongoing U.S. involvement in Iraq and mounting tensions between Israel and Syria, it seems clear that strained relations with Damascus complicate the pursuit of broader U.S. interests in the region.

Unfortunately, the Bush administration has had little success to date in getting Syria to modify its problematic behaviors or in cultivating a more constructive relationship with the Asad regime, despite letters and phone calls to Dr. Bashar from President Bush, personal meetings with Secretary Powell, and visits by other senior officials such as Ambassador Burns. The lack of results stems, in my view, from the policy vacuum I just described. Three years into its tenure, the Bush administration has failed to develop a genuine strategy for changing problematic Syrian behaviors and resolving the outstanding bilateral differences between Washington and Damascus. The United States still lacks a framework for constructively engaging Syria apart from the Syrian track of the peace process.

What should such a strategy look like? As I have noted in other settings since leaving government, a strategy for modifying the behavior of rogue regimes has to be rooted in hard-nosed, carrots-and-sticks engagement. We have to contrast the benefits of cooperation with the likely costs of noncooperation—in other words, to tell rogue leaders what's in it for them if they change their behavior, and make sure they understand what will happen to them if they don't.

Would such a strategy work with regard to Syria, as it has worked to move Sudan in a positive direction on terrorism and to induce Libya to meet its international obligations in the PanAm 103 case? Or, is Syria more analogous to Afghanistan under the Taliban or Saddam Hussein's Iraq—an irredeemable regime, incapable of modifying its behavior, regardless of the incentives and disincentives put in front of it? The answers to these questions lie in an assessment of Dr. Bashar as national leader.

Currently, three alternative "images" of Bashar dominate discussion and debate about Syria in the region, in Europe, and here in the United States.

- Some believe that he is a closet reformer, hemmed in by an "old guard" he inherited, along with his position, from his father. He is not an incorrigible thug like Saddam Hussein or a religious ideologue like Mullah Omar.
- Others see Bashar as a loyal son of both father and regime, seeking to protect Syria's Ba'athist order; some analysts in this camp suggest that Bashar may in fact be more ideological in his approach to foreign policy than his father, perhaps under the influence of Hizballah's Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah.

- A third school sees Bashar as inexperienced, unable to play the game of regional maneuvering with anything like his late father's acumen.

In reality, all three assessments contain elements of truth.

- Bashar has demonstrated some reformist impulses. He is not an ideological fanatic like Mullah Muhammad Omar or an incorrigible thug like Saddam Hussein. He is young, educated partly in the West, and married to a British-born woman who was once in J.P. Morgan's executive training program and passed up admission to Harvard's MBA program to marry him. Bashar has made it clear that Syria needs to modernize, and that its long-term interests would be served by better relations with the United States, but has been constrained by his father's still-powerful retainers.
- Bashar can indeed fall into the most strident sort of Ba'athist, anti-American rhetoric, and he has not demonstrated much flexibility on foreign policy, where he appears to be trying to follow the strategic "script" he received from his father. This script acknowledges the desirability of a better relationship with the United States but makes a strategic breakthrough dependent on meeting conditions rooted in the tensions of Syrian domestic politics.
- Bashar is obviously less experienced than his father, and certainly makes more than his share of mistakes.

What all of this suggests is that Bashar could be a suitable subject for diplomatic engagement, but only if engagement provides him with a clear roadmap to the desired goal and empowers him to move in that direction. It is not enough to complain about problematic Syrian behaviors: we have been doing that for 24 years, since we first sanctioned Syria as a state sponsor of terror. Instead, we must give Bashar explicit and specific targets for reversing problematic behaviors. And engagement must be backed by a set of policy tools that would impose significant costs for continued non-compliance with U.S. requirements but also promise significant benefits in the event of cooperation—in other words, carrots and sticks.

There is a lot of discussion in Washington right now about new sticks in our Syria policy. But I don't hear much discussion about carrots; indeed, the Bush Administration resists intensely any such discussion. But this leaves us with a dysfunctional policy. We must be prepared to contrast the prospective costs of non-cooperation, such as economic sanctions, with the prospective gains from cooperation. Prospective gains could include:

- Syria's removal from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, provided it expels terrorists from its territory, renews counterterrorist cooperation with the United States against Al Qaida, and broadens that cooperation to include Syria's own terrorist links. In the 1990s, we made Syria's removal from the list contingent on a peace treaty with Israel that never came; we should now tie removal to changes in Syria's relations with terrorists. Taking Syria off the list would allow American economic aid to flow to the country for the first time in decades and substantially increase assistance from international financial institutions.
- Accommodation of Syrian interests in Iraq, if Damascus helped tackle the security problems there. This could include facilitation of Syrian-Iraqi trade and Syrian participation in Iraqi reconstruction, but should also allow for a strategic dialogue between Washington and Damascus on Syria's regional interests. The Syrian regime has had a chronic fear of regional marginalization. Following the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Syria's principal forum for having its regional interests considered by the United States was the Syrian track. We should now indicate a willingness to begin talking with Bashar about Syria's regional interests, but only on condition that he take steps to cut his country's links to terrorists and begin cooperating with U.S. goals in Iraq.

We should also make an exception to allow Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) funding to go to NGOs in Syria. Right now, our policy does not even allow U.S. Government funds to go to civil society activists or micro-entrepreneurs in Syria because of the prohibition on any U.S. Government money going to a state sponsor of terrorism. This prevents us from engaging and empowering reformists in Syria who could support a Bashar willing to take the tough decisions we require.

A smartly constructed package of carrots and sticks would empower Assad to show the regime's inner circle and his public that Syria interests would be better served by cooperation with the United States than by continued resistance. This is the key, in my view, to a more constructive U.S. relationship with Syria. Thank you for your attention.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Leverett.

We will have questions now of the panel, and Senator Biden and I will go back and forth. I would suggest that we try maybe 8 minutes and we will alternate.

Mr. Leverett, let me proceed with your thoughts. I was following intently your line of thought on offering carrots. Someone else said earlier in some part of our dialogue that we should have larger carrots, larger sticks. Try to further sharpen, if you can, the choice of carrots. In other words, I am not certain I have a clear perception of what it is that we ought to be doing that is more attractive.

For example, the second carrot idea on Iraq: Maybe many other countries are confused about our policy in Iraq, although as Americans we do not see much confusion. We are struggling mightily with our coalition partners to try to bring about a regime of human rights, of democracy, of some economic freedom for the people of the country, of a new idea, which some countries in the region might find dangerous, ideas that could spread and that could lead to instability.

Now, it would appear that we are being opposed from day to day by people who may be a part of the previous regime of Saddam, maybe persons coming in from other countries who want to join the war against terror on the side of whoever is trying to disrupt this. The killings of the UN people, the Red Cross people, of innocent Iraqis, quite apart from targets of American soldiers, are extremely violent and fairly consistent.

So when we approach Syria and say, we think you ought to be on our side on this, and there is ambivalence, to say the least, from the Syrians this is confusing for us, however confusing it may be for the Syrians. So try on for size again the Iraq situation. How do we have a carrot there that is meaningful?

Dr. LEVERETT. I think, to put it in context from a Syrian perspective, one of the chronic concerns of the Syrian regime—this certainly goes back to the time of Hafez Al-Asad, but I think it very much continues in the way that Bashar and the people around him look at the regional situation—the biggest fear from Damascus's standpoint is one of regional marginalization, that the United States is going to be able over time literally to encircle Syria with a series of pro-western regimes.

You have Israel and you have the whole history of efforts to broker a separate peace with Lebanon. You have Jordan now very firmly in the American camp; Saudi Arabia; go on around the region. And now you have Iraq flip over in a big way.

The CHAIRMAN. What would be wrong with that? Why is that not in the best interests of the world, for that to happen?

Dr. LEVERETT. Because at that point, if the Syrian track of the peace process is still unresolved, there is, from a Syrian perspective, no particular reason why the United States or the rest of the world really has to pay attention to that issue. The United States would have the strategic position that it wanted, Syria is in no position on its own to threaten Israeli strategic interests in a fundamental way, and at that point Syria could be ignored. I think that is the biggest fear that a Syrian leader has.

What something like a six plus two framework for Iraq could do in helping us manage the Syrian relationship is assuage that concern and help the Syrian leadership to understand that we in fact

do want to accommodate their legitimate regional interests as part of what we are trying to do in the region.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, let us say that we did try to understand their legitimate interests, which might be settlement of the Golan Heights dilemma, for example. Can you parse that type of activity as to simply street antipathy to Israel, in which finally you try to work out various things pragmatically? Syrian leadership may be influenced by the street or maybe the other way around—I do not know, maybe both—and just simply say: We do not like Israel; as a matter of fact, we just wish they were not there.

Therefore we get back again and again to the question of, why are you in the United States interested in an Israel that is finally accepted by everybody and that lives in peace and negotiates, as opposed to taking a position of indifference, that Israelis just have to fend for themselves and the United States will not be involved?

I mean, is there ever any way out of that kind of dilemma, perhaps simply by working through the other elements of the settlement of the Syrian situation?

Dr. LEVERETT. I believe that there is, Senator. I think that as a result of the work that was done during the 1990's on the Syria track that we understand very well what the requirements are for peace that would meet Syrian needs on return of territory, full withdrawal of Israel from the Golan, and Israel's needs for security guarantees and normal relations with Damascus afterwards. We know what that agreement would look like.

We are just simply not in a position at this point to deliver on that or try to make it happen in a very feasible way. I think that the Syrians, without any great altruism toward Israel, have basically made the calculation that over the long run that is in their interest, that is the best deal that they can hope for strategically to help their place in the region, to help their position with us. I think if we get back into an environment in which the kind of deal I was talking about would be feasible, the Syrians would go for it.

The CHAIRMAN. That point of view is an important one. It is held by a good number of people who have studied this area a long time, in the same way that some of the same people hold the view that we know what a Palestinian-Israeli settlement will look like. We have been down that trail many, many times before.

So in other words, in our minds' eyes we have an idea of what the settlement is. But then you get back to the problem. Nevertheless, even though we have pronounced the Road Map strategy and even got steam rapidly generated behind that, we may not know how it all ought to come out or whether it is off track. We are back to a situation which all of you have described today, which, to say the least, is disheartening.

Let me ask Dr. Clawson: in your analysis of the new leadership you were more oblique about that than perhaps your panel members, and maybe correctly so. But if this is a new regime, with a new president who has problems that are even greater, what might bring him back into this framework that we are talking about, in which we finally realize some objectives from the past, deal with the reality, and move on? Is that in the cards at all with this leadership?

Dr. CLAWSON. I would be very pessimistic about progress soon on a Syrian-Israeli peace because, as all of us has emphasized, Bashar has found it extremely difficult to break with the old guard of the past. And for him to accept a deal which his father refused would be dynamite in the Syrian political scene. Since the deal which in fact Bashar—excuse me—Hafez Asad refused when offered him by President Clinton in Geneva in the spring of the year 2000 was extraordinarily close to what it was the Syrians had long told us they would insist on, involving an extraordinarily extensive Israeli withdrawal, I think it would be very difficult, very difficult, for Bashar to make progress on this front.

I am more optimistic on some of the other fronts. I think there is some real prospects that we could make progress on the Lebanon issue, on Hizballah, on Iraq, and I think that that could create an environment where down the road we could imagine getting back to the kind of Geneva deal, which is about the best that we are going to see for the Syrians.

The CHAIRMAN. So you might make headway there? In other words, it is not just a question that the new leader has to be there for quite a long while before he consolidates his own authority, confidence, and what have you?

Dr. CLAWSON. That would help, but I also think he could consolidate his authority and confidence in his rule faster if he can show that he can deliver on some of these other issues and get some of the carrots that Flynt was mentioning. And I would quite agree with him.

My great concern is at the moment Bashar does not believe that there are any sticks in the United States. He looks at what happened with the oil pipeline from Iraq, where we talked tough and we did not do a darn thing about it, and he directly liked to Colin Powell about it, and yet there were no consequences as far as he could see. He continued to get the revenue.

So he does not believe that there are any sticks from us and he does not believe there are any carrots from us. So he does not see any reason to change his behavior.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Biden.

Senator BIDEN. Dr. Jouejati, you and Professor Clawson come at this completely differently. You basically say that you have to get the Palestinian-Israeli track, the Israeli-Syrian track, settled before you are going to make any progress on these other things. And Dr. Clawson, unless I misunderstand him, says it is going to work the other way; you will be able to get some progress moving the other way before you get to the Golan.

Could you, because you seem very certain of what you are saying, could you tell us what you think Syria believes it needs in order to, quote, “do a deal”? What is it do you believe—how far would the Israelis have to go to get yes for an answer in terms of at least the Israeli-Syrian relationship?

Dr. JOUEJATI. Thank you, Senator Biden. Israel would have to not so much please the whims of Syria, but to abide by UN resolutions.

Senator BIDEN. Oh, I got that. Look, we have an old expression where I come from: Let us not kid a kidder. We all know what the UN resolutions are.

I would like you to be as specific with me as you were on other parts of your views about Syria. What specifically is it? Is it—I mean, can you describe it, not in the context of UN resolutions, in the context of concrete action that you believe would have to occur in order for Syria to say, we have got a deal with Israel?

Dr. JOUEJATI. To withdraw totally to the June 4th lines of 1967 from the Golan Heights and to see on the Palestinian-Israeli track at least some positive developments that might lead in the end to the establishment of a Palestinian state very much in conformity with the vision of President Bush.

This is a longstanding Syrian demand, and where I do disagree with Dr. Clawson when he says about the old guard and the new guard, here on this very issue I believe the old guard and the new guard are very, very much united. President Asad, the late President Asad, had he been able to obtain from the Israelis that commitment to withdraw to the June 4th lines, I think there would have been peace between Syria and Israel. I do not think Bashar Asad can accept any less, though.

Senator BIDEN. Excuse me. What you just said contradicts that. You just said that it would have to be the total withdrawal and there would have to be progress, whatever, not defined, progress with regard to the rest of the issue with the Palestinians.

Dr. JOUEJATI. Right. In other words, Syria—Syria by virtue of its past, by virtue of its national role conception as the champion of Arab rights, cannot be seen, I believe, because this would hurt the legitimacy of the regime, cannot be seen as operating in isolation, as having a separate peace treaty with Israel.

Senator BIDEN. So this notion of two tracks is one that goes to a dead end from your standpoint? There is no possibility of a two-track solution, unless the second track simultaneously ends where the first track ends and consistent with what the Syrians think is the appropriate settlement, correct?

Dr. JOUEJATI. Well, let me try to be more clear than I have been. I think—and I may be wrong—that President Asad when he went to Geneva to meet with President Clinton to talk about all this, I think at the end of the day he would not have signed a peace treaty. He would have waited for further development on the Palestinian track. But his—from his angle, from his Syrian angle, he would have been satisfied that Israel had delivered to Syria what Syria demands.

And I think the same applies to this President.

Senator BIDEN. But what would the former Asad and the present one do if that were delivered? I mean, you know, delivery is a two-way street. What delivery would come? Would they cease and desist supporting Hizballah? Would they call effectively a time out while the negotiation went on? Would they, as for example the practical—I am not trying to be argumentative. I am trying to understand. Practically speaking, you could have a circumstance where you had a—Hizballah and Syria have two different agendas. Hizballah's clear agenda is no Israel, period.

Now, that I assume is not Syria's agenda. Syria's agenda is a settlement between, that is fair, and establishment of a Palestinian state that is free and fairly arrived at, and total withdrawal to the pre-June borders, the June 4 borders before the war, on the Golan.

But my dilemma here is when folks like you talk to me about this, I mean from both perspectives, is that you never connect all the dots. There is a third dot and the third dot that matters most to Israel, assuming Israel were acting from your perspective much more rationally, is that terrorists cease and desist and support for terrorists cease and desists.

But it is clear that the Jihad and Hizballah has made it very clear it will not cease and desist, period, until there is no Israel. They are not signed onto a two-state solution. They have not signed onto the notion that there would be any compromise on Jerusalem, compromise on anything.

So it seems to me your prescription for how to proceed with Syria is fundamentally flawed. Explain to me why I am wrong about that?

Dr. JOUEJATI. Senator, what Syria will give in return—you ask what will Syria deliver. That is the normalization of relations with Israel, and normalization here—and it has been talked about between Syrians and the Israelis on the official level—would be the establishment of diplomatic relations—

Senator BIDEN. Got that.

Dr. JOUEJATI. With an Israeli embassy in Damascus, with an Israeli flag waving over it.

Senator BIDEN. That would be a wonderful thing as long, that flag waving over it, if they were not still funding and supporting Hizballah. Let us get to Hizballah.

Dr. JOUEJATI. Moreover, Syria will have a mutual security arrangement with Israel on the Golan Heights. There would be a joint water-sharing mechanism on Lake Tiberias.

Senator BIDEN. Got that.

Dr. JOUEJATI. And when there is peace, Senator, between Syria and Israel, there is no need for PIJ to have an office in Damascus, there is no need for Hamas to—

Senator BIDEN. Why is there no need? Because remember, the second part of your equation here is that the Palestinian track has to be one, since they view themselves, the Syrians, as the leader of the Arab world and the region, is that the Palestinians have to be satisfied. And yet you have the very people they are funding now saying there is no satisfaction available short of elimination of the state of Israel. So that is what confuses me.

Dr. JOUEJATI. No, I do not think there is any room for confusion. Israel—Syria, rather, Syria has accepted de facto Israel within its '67 boundaries and so have all the Arab states.

Senator BIDEN. Well, I know, I know—

Dr. JOUEJATI. There are marginal groups, Senator, like Hamas and PIJ and so on—

Senator BIDEN. Yes, the ones that they are supporting. So what I want to know is what gets them to stop supporting those groups?

Dr. JOUEJATI. What stops them to—what gets them to stop supporting these groups is peace with Israel, and that assumes Israel's withdrawal from occupied territories.

Senator BIDEN. Notwithstanding the fact that it is not sufficient for the very groups they are supporting?

Dr. JOUEJATI. These groups as far as Syria is concerned and I think as far as all Arab states are concerned would then occupy a very, very marginal position. Inside Syria it would then be illegal for any group that wants to wage war against Israel to exist on Syrian soil.

Senator BIDEN. Well, that is kind of encouraging, because the truth of the matter is, you know, Israel does not have much to worry about from Syria except their support for terrorist groups. I mean, what the hell difference does it make to Israel whether it has peace with Syria but for that issue? I mean, what flows from there other than that? So that seems to me to be the ultimate.

We talk about carrots and sticks. We talk about who needs what. Syria very much wants to regain its self-respect, wants to regain the Golan, wants Israel off, quote, "its" territory. I understand that part of the equation. But I do not know what, absent an up-front acknowledgment, if that occurs, there will be a ceasing and desisting.

In my conversations in Syria, the kind of thing that I heard—we all hear all kinds of conversations, Mr. Ambassador; we all get told different things; it is not a monolithic voice that comes out of Damascus or any country—is that the fact of the matter is that we cannot be seen as letting down the Palestinians, and the voice of Mr. Arafat now and the voice of Hizballah and the voice of the Fatah and the voice is simply one that suggests right now that there is no—there is no outline for peace that falls within the framework of all those groups.

There is an outline for peace that falls within the framework of the negotiations of the vast majority of the Palestinians and everybody knows what they are. I mean, like you said, Mr. Leverett, everybody knows what is needed in these various deals. Everybody knows there has got to be compromise on Jerusalem, not absolute. Everybody knows that there has got to be elimination of the vast majority of the settlements, but compromise on the remaining some of the settlements. Everybody knows there—everybody knows the pieces. Everybody knows there cannot be an absolute right of return.

Yet those basic points are fundamentally rejected by, they are nonstarters for, the very groups that are blowing up people right now. So I do not—I find it—I have lost, quite frankly, faith in the credibility of Mr. Arafat and-or Mr. Asad and others without their up-front acknowledgment that they are the elements they are willing to negotiate, which is a de facto, a de facto disagreement with the very people that are blowing folks up.

Anyway, I am taking too much time, but I find it—and I also have—I mean, carrots and sticks. It is self-evident that if they stop supporting these groups, Mr. Leverett, they will be taken off the terrorist list. They know that. How is that a carrot? How is that a carrot? I do not get that. I do not see any carrots here you are offering, and the sticks you are offering are ones that I think you have all figured out. Asad knows the stick is not going to be—this President has no capacity as a political matter to invade Syria now.

Dr. CLAWSON. Senator, do not underestimate how much Mr. Asad cares about the kind of rhetorical stance that we take, and how the kind of coverage that has been given to the deliberations in Congress over the Syria Accountability Act indicates that Damascus is hypersensitive to the kinds of things we have to say. I think that Damascus, for instance—

Senator BIDEN. Give me any evidence of that based on their conduct?

Dr. CLAWSON. What we heard from the first panel was that in the last few weeks there has been greater cooperation around the question of the \$3 billion in funds and about border control. I think that that is distinctly related to the progress that the Syria Accountability Act—

Senator BIDEN. I see zero evidence of that. The evidence of that relates to the progress being taken on the ground in the regions that we are occupying in the areas that they have been cooperating. I think you guys are smoking something. I mean, I do not see this at all. I mean, I think this is like an academic exercise at a great university about how we write the term paper.

I mean, I really think there is very little connection to reality here, because the converse is true. If in fact they were worried about our actions and Congress's actions and the President's threats, there would have been a continuum of the cooperation that began immediately after, immediately after, we invaded Iraq, which then there was some accountability, because they really were worried that the voices of the Richard Perles and the Wolfowitzes and the neocons may in fact be not an echo, but be the voice of America, and there are 120,000 troops sitting on their northern border and they were worried they would pivot and move south.

Once they figured out that there was no possibility of them pivoting anywhere, all of a sudden things began to change. At least I think that. It is presumptuous of me to say. I do not know that any more than you know that there has been any movement based upon the Syria Accountability Act.

Anyway, I am frustrated, as you can see. But I am sure you all are from a lifetime of dealing with it.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me start my questioning just by responding, or rather allowing each of you to speak. Dr. Jouejati.

Dr. JOUEJATI. May I, Senator? On the question of Iraq, I think Syrian cooperation has been increasing in the past and what the Syrians are comforted by is that they have—they are seeing now the beginnings of a timetable. This is especially true—

The CHAIRMAN. Let us get it straight. There is no straight line cooperation. There is no straight line cooperation. Let us get it straight now. There is some cooperation in some areas and less cooperation in other areas. There is no straight line here factually. There is none.

Dr. JOUEJATI. Factually, Senator, first of all, the assets that the Iraqis have are reported to be far less than \$3 billion. This is number one.

Two, according to my understanding and to the information I have, yesterday a senior official of the Department of Defense invited the Syrian charge d'affairs in Washington to thank him for Syria's cooperation on that score, on the unfreezing of the assets.

Senator BIDEN. Well, they froze the assets, then they drew down the assets to pay off what was owed to them by the Iraqis, and now they are ready to talk about the rest of the assets. That seems to me to be logical, but it does not demonstrate a new-found cooperation.

Dr. JOUEJATI. The new-found cooperation is of course in the presence of those Treasury Department folks who are in Damascus and who have talked with the Central Bank of Syria folks, and as a result we have now, at least in the Department of Defense, some happy people according to them and the Syrian charge d'affaires. This is on one level.

On the other level, again I can only speak to what General Petraeus is saying—my information is not from the Syrian government—and also to Sir Jeremy Greenstock, and they seem to be very happy with Syrian cooperation first on the score of trying to stop the jihadists from going to Iraq. And the Syrians do not succeed all the time because it is a long and porous border and because they do not have the necessary resources.

Two, again, Syria—and this is, it is making money out of it, of course, but it is providing the area of Mosul with electricity and that has a stabilizing effect. So again, Syrian cooperation, Syria's increased cooperation if I want to be more accurate, on the score of Iraq, as a result that now there is a comfort that the United States has a timetable for a constitution and for this and that, and this was not the case earlier.

Senator BIDEN. I hope you are right. There is decreased cooperation in al-Qaeda. There is decreased cooperation in other areas, but it is kind of interesting. But go ahead.

The CHAIRMAN. Ambassador Murphy, will you have any comment?

Ambassador MURPHY. Just a brief comment, Mr. Chairman. I hear Senator Biden virtually saying that he cannot foresee any way that Hamas and Jihad can ever change. Well, I do.

Senator BIDEN. Oh, yes, I am saying that.

Ambassador MURPHY. Well, you have asked if we are smoking something. No, it is Federal premises; we are not smoking; we are trying to clear that air. The fact is, I look at Avigdor Liberman sitting on the opposition bench in the Knesset; now actually in the cabinet, who has had a lifelong commitment to the expulsion of every last Palestinian from Israel. I foresee a day when there is a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

Senator BIDEN. Are you comparing him to Hamas and Jihad?

Ambassador MURPHY. I am comparing his absolute view that that is the only solution for Israel with the Hamas view that Israel should not exist.

Senator BIDEN. I see.

Ambassador MURPHY. One day there will be a Palestinian parliament, Hamas and Islamic Jihad will be in opposition, but there will be peace. And I agree there will only be peace if the Palestinian leadership and countries like Syria exert the control to keep them from doing more than making speeches on the opposition bench.

Senator BIDEN. Well, I agree with that. That does not constitute a change in their attitude.

Ambassador MURPHY. Today there is—look closely also at the Hizballah situation. Where does the operetta continue? On that tiny section of the Lebanese-Israeli border of the Shabah Farms. It is not raging up and down the Lebanese-Israeli frontier.

Senator BIDEN. Why?

Ambassador MURPHY. Is it self-control of—

Senator BIDEN. Why?

Ambassador MURPHY. I do not know.

Senator BIDEN. I think I do and I think you do.

Ambassador MURPHY. I think it is a combination of Syrian pressure—

Senator BIDEN. Bingo.

Ambassador MURPHY. I think it is also perhaps Hizballah's own interests within the Lebanese political world.

Senator BIDEN. Bingo.

Ambassador MURPHY. Iran, I do not know. Do you have a view on Iran's role?

Senator BIDEN. No, I think those are fully sufficient. Some might argue that was the case because Israel may decide to go beyond what they did, speaking of sticks.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Clawson.

Dr. CLAWSON. At an Arab summit 2 years ago, Bashar Asad is reported to have told the other Arab leaders that they can ignore the words coming out of Washington because Washington's words do not mean very much and the United States does not do very much to back up either its threats or its promises. I think that is very much an attitude that he has displayed over the last 2 years.

It is very hard for us to get his attention and to take very seriously what we say either way, about sticks or carrots. So it is important that we measure our words and that we find a way to demonstrate our credibility to this fellow, who unfortunately does not take us very seriously. To the extent that he does take us seriously, then I think that we can get some degree of cooperation out of him through a combination of sticks and carrots.

But at the moment we have quite low credibility with him because he does not think that we carry through very much on what we say. The episode with the oil pipeline from Iraq has hurt us very, very badly in that regard, because he was making an awful lot of money off that pipeline and he directly promised the Secretary of State that that pipeline would not be opened until the money was put under the UN, and he knew the Secretary of State had the President woken up to be told this wonderful news. Yet, when Bashar paid no attention to that there was no consequence from the United States.

It would not have been hard for us to bomb the pumping stations inside Iraq and to shut that pipeline down. We did not do it, and as a result we have very little credibility with this guy and it is going to take a long time to reestablish that credibility.

But I would hope that we can do that by offering measured and small, small, sticks, which is all we are doing with the Syria Accountability Act, and I would offer some small carrots and I suggested some, like computer education and any potentially discussing debt relief, meanwhile coordinating with the Europeans, who have got this great big carrot that they are dangling in front

of the Syrians at the moment, this Trade Association Agreement that they have been negotiating for decades.

For gosh sakes, let us persuade the Europeans that before they sign that, get something from the guy. Based on what the Europeans have done with the Iranians, which is said no progress on economics until there is progress on human rights and on weapons of mass destruction, on the peace process, on terrorism, let us ask the Europeans: Okay, what can we do to work with you to see that you take that same approach regarding Syria.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me intrude at this point, because we would enjoy continuing the dialogue for a long time, but a roll call vote is under way. There are 7 minutes left to go and Senator Biden and I will need to do our duty in another forum.

But we thank you very much for coming to this hearing.

Senator BIDEN. We thank you all very, very much.

The CHAIRMAN. It has been very, very helpful for our understanding, we hope for those who have joined us in the hearing room and for the American people who watch this on C-SPAN. Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 12:58 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]