

U.S. POLICY TOWARD SYRIA AND THE SYRIA ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

HEARING

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST
AND SOUTH ASIA
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA,
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:04 a.m. in Room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Benjamin A. Gilman, Chairman, presiding.

Mr. GILMAN. The Committee will come to order. Will the Members please take their seats. Due to time constraints, besides my opening statement, we will forego all other openings.

It's my pleasure to welcome our witnesses today, and as soon as they arrive, we will be able to get started.

In his June 24th address on the Middle East, President Bush put Syria on notice, stating that:

“Syria must choose the right side in the war on terror by closing terrorist camps and expelling terrorist organizations.”

Yet Syria's words and actions since then have not been those of a state that shares our commitment, both to our twin goals of eradicating global terrorism and fostering stability in the Middle East.

Rather, with a few exceptions taken in its self-interest, Syria had demonstrated that it continues to actively undermine the basis for our campaigning against terrorism and our initiatives aimed at ending the violence in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza.

According to the State Department's report on Patterns on Global Terrorism—2001, Syria continued to provide “safe haven and logistics support to Hezbollah, HAMAS, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and other terrorist organizations.”

Syria's President Bashar al-Assad has allowed Hezbollah, the Lebanese terrorist group under his patronage, to intensify its military activities along Israel's northern border. Working closely with Iran, Syria has facilitated the transfer of thousands of rockets and other weaponry to Hezbollah, boosting their arsenal and significantly improving their ability to carry out terror attacks against Israel. Of the seven state sponsors on the Administration's list, only Syria rivals Iran in its unabashed support for terrorism.

In addition to Syria's support for terrorism, Syria continues its illegal occupation of Lebanon in contravention of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 425 and 520.

Through its occupation of Lebanon, it undermines democracy and development there, providing protection for criminal enterprises, such as the growth and production of drugs and of Western and Arab currency counterfeiting in the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon, whose profits serve to finance the activities of Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations.

Even as America prepares for what appears to be an inevitable confrontation with Iraq, recent press reports indicate that the Syrians have been busy supplying Saddam Hussein with weapons. Syria also continues to serve as a conduit for illegal oil exports. Moreover, there is a direct pipeline from Iraq into Syria from which Iraq derives illicit profits in the billions of dollars.

These actions not only constitute a direct violation of resolutions passed by the very body that it serves on—the U.N. Security Council—but they will only help to strengthen Saddam even as he prepares to confront our nation.

Syria's support for terrorism, aid to Saddam Hussein's regime, and other illicit activities not only jeopardize the post-September 11th international consensus delegitimizing terrorism, but it compromises our ability to procure peace and stability in the region. Our nation respond accordingly.

H.R. 4483, the Syria Accountability Act of 2002, is one such response, and I want to take this opportunity to thank our distinguished Majority Leader, the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Armev, and the distinguished Member of our Committee, the gentleman from New York, Mr. Engel, for their leadership in introducing this important piece of legislation that's before us today. I want to congratulate them for their good work.

The Syria Accountability Act would prohibit exporting any item on the United States Munitions List or Commerce Control List of dual-use items in the Export Administration Regulations.

It would prohibit the provision of any U.S. assistance to our U.S. businesses with respect to investment or other activities in Syria, or conducting Overseas Private Investment Corporation and Trade Development Agency programs in or with respect to Syria. It also directs our President to impose two or more on a list of other sanctions against Syria.

The Administration contends that the Syria Accountability Act "ties its hands at a very important moment," and that "this is not the right time for legislative initiatives that could complicate or even undermine the efforts of the State Department."

It's important for the Administration to take into account that many of its sanctions are subject to waiver and the entire sanctions regime would be obviated if Syria were to behave like a normal state. It's also important to note these are not secondary sanctions, and they do not effect third countries, and, as a result, have little impact on our commercial and diplomatic ties with Syria's major trading partners.

As our President so eloquently articulated, states and their leaders are either with us or against us in our war on terrorism—there is no room for hesitation, no room for wavering if a regime is to be truly considered an ally in our war on terror. Only when our nation comes to adopt this determined approach with regard to the Syrian regime will that regime be faced with the difficult dilemma

of whether to acquiesce to American and international pressure and fundamentally alter Syrian policy, or face further alienation. Normal U.S.-Syrian bilateral relations must be contingent upon the reversal of policies which are harmful to U.S. interest.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gillman follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE BENJAMIN A. GILMAN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK, AND CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

In his June 24th address on the Middle East, President Bush put Syria on notice, stating that "Syria must choose the right side in the war on terror by closing terrorist camps and expelling terrorist organizations." Yet Syria's words and actions since then have not been those of a state that shares our commitment both to our twin goals of eradicating global terrorism and fostering stability in the Middle East. Rather, with a few exceptions taken in its own self-interest, Syria has demonstrated that it continues to actively undermine the basis for our campaign against terrorism and our initiatives aimed at ending the violence in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza.

According to the State Department's report on Patterns of Global Terrorism—2001, Syria continued to provide "safe haven and logistics support to Hezbollah, HAMAS, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and other terrorist organizations." Syria's President Bashar al-Assad has allowed Hezbollah, the Lebanese terrorist group under his patronage, to intensify its military activities along Israel's northern border. Working closely with Iran, Syria has facilitated the transfer of thousands of rockets and other weaponry to Hezbollah, boosting their arsenal and significantly improving their ability to carry out terror attacks against Israel. Of the seven state sponsors on the Administration's list, only Syria rivals Iran in its unabashed support for terrorism.

In addition to Syria's support for terrorism, Syria continues its illegal occupation of Lebanon in contravention of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 425 and 520. Through its occupation of Lebanon, it undermines democracy and development there. It provides protection for criminal enterprises, such as the growth and production of drugs and of Western and Arab currency counterfeiting in the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon, whose profits serve to finance the activities of Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations.

And even as America prepares for what appears to be an inevitable confrontation with Iraq, recent press reports indicate that the Syrians are busy supplying Saddam Hussein with weapons. Syria also continues to serve as a conduit for illegal Iraqi oil exports. Moreover, there is a direct pipeline from Iraq into Syria from which Iraq derives illicit profits. These actions not only constitute a direct violation of resolutions passed by the very body that it serves on—the U.N. Security Council—but they will only help to strengthen Saddam even as he prepares to confront the United States.

Syria's support for terrorism, aid to Saddam Hussein's regime, and other illicit activities not only jeopardize the post-September 11th international consensus delegitimizing terrorism, but it compromises our ability to procure peace and stability in the region.

The United States must respond accordingly.

H.R. 4483, the Syria Accountability Act of 2002, is one such response, and I would like take this opportunity to thank our distinguished Majority Leader from Texas, Mr. Arney, and the distinguished Member of our Committee, Mr. Engel for their leadership in introducing this important piece of legislation, and congratulate them for their good work.

The Syria Accountability Act would prohibit exporting any item on the United States Munitions List or Commerce Control List of dual-use items in the Export Administration Regulations. It would prohibit the provision of any U.S. assistance to U.S. businesses with respect to investment or other activities in Syria, or conducting Overseas Private Investment Corporation and Trade Development Agency programs in or with respect to Syria. It also directs the President to impose two or more on a list of other sanctions against Syria.

The Administration contends that the Syria Accountability Act "ties its hands at a very important moment, and that "this is not the right time for legislative initiatives that could complicate or even undermine" the efforts of the State Department. It is important for the Administration to take into account that many of the of the sanctions are subject to waiver and the entire sanctions regime is obviated if Syria behaves like a normal state. It is also important to note that these are not sec-

ondary sanctions, and they do not affect third countries, and, as a result, have little impact on our commercial and diplomatic ties with Syria's major trading partners.

As the President so eloquently articulated, states and their leaders are either with us or against us in the war on terrorism—there is no room for hesitation, no room for wavering, if a regime is to be truly considered an ally in our war on terror. Only when the U.S. comes to adopt this determined approach with regard to the Syrian regime, will that regime be faced with the difficult dilemma of whether to acquiesce to American and international pressure and fundamentally alter Syrian policy, or face further alienation. Normal U.S.-Syrian bilateral relations must be contingent upon the reversal of policies which are harmful to U.S. interests.

Mr. GILMAN. We regret that Ambassador David Satterfield, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs will be unable to be with us.

We now call on our witnesses, and it's my pleasure to introduce our distinguished Majority Leader, who will soon be leaving us, regrettably, along with my unnecessary involuntary retirement.

It is my pleasure to ask our distinguished Majority Leader, Mr. ArmeY, the gentleman from Texas, who has had a long and distinguished career in public service to give us his testimony on his important bill. Thank you for being here, Mr. Majority Leader.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE RICHARD K. ARMEY, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS

Mr. ARMEY. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me say, first of all, it's a pleasure to be here.

Mr. GILMAN. Would you press your button on your microphone?

Mr. ARMEY. My buttons, got you. I always prefer to push my own buttons, Mr. Chairman, and I thank you.

It is a pleasure to be here, and it is a pleasure, Mr. Chairman, to be here before you in front of your portrait, which I might say doesn't make you look near as young and handsome as you are in fact.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you, Mr. Majority Leader.

Mr. ARMEY. It's a particular pleasure for me to be here with my co-sponsor, Mr. Engel, a Member of your Committee.

I should caution you, Mr. Chairman, that because I take foreign affairs as seriously as I do, and consider the subject to be one where subtleties matter in the way things are expressed, I will read my statement. It's been carefully written, and I think in reading it enables me to make the most precise clarity and minimize the chance for things to be misunderstood.

However, as I mentioned to you on the Floor yesterday, since I am not a man of your experience in travel, I must advise you that I am likely to mispronounce half of the Middle East in this discussion, and for that I will make my apologies ahead of time.

Let me just say to be here to speak with Mr. Engel on behalf of H.R. 4483, the Syrian Accountability Act 2002, is, I think, a very serious business. And I dare say, we both have taken it quite seriously.

Syria has been on the State Department's terrorist list since 1979. There are seven countries currently on the terrorist list. The United States has sanctions against, and has broken normal relations with five of the seven nations on that list. Those five nations are Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Libya and Cuba. The House passed the Sudan Peace Act in response to its concern with the sixth country, Sudan.

Now I come to speak about my concerns about the seventh, and to question whether we should have normal, sanction-free relations with Syria.

As we continue to wage war on terrorism, Syria is a country that enjoys full diplomatic relations with the United States, trade relations with the United States companies, and receives significant foreign aid from some of our closest allies, while it simultaneously cuddles up to Saddam Hussein's regime, protects some of the world's most active terrorist organizations within its borders, and repeatedly violates international law.

During my testimony today, I will review the threats that Syria poses through its support of terrorism, its occupation of Lebanon, its development of weapons of mass destruction, and its illegal importation of Iraqi oil. These are threats to the United States and its allies around the world.

Our inaction on holding Syria accountable for its dangerous activities could seriously diminish our efforts on the war on terrorism and our efforts in brokering a viable peace in the Middle East.

Syria should be held accountable for its record of harboring and supporting terrorist groups; stockpiling illegal weapons in an effort to develop weapons of mass destruction; and transferring weapons and oil back and forth through Iraq.

In his June 24th speech, President Bush made a very clear statement of U.S. policy, and I quote,

“Nations are either with us or against us in the war on terror.”

In that speech, he also laid down the gauntlet for Syria. He said,

“Syria must choose the right side in the war on terror by closing terrorist camps and expelling terrorist organizations.”

A year has now passed, and the deadline for this choice has come and gone. The Congress of the United States cannot allow Syria to continue activities that pose a threat to the United States and our allies without consequence.

As evidence for our serious support of terror, let me say, that while Syria publicly condemned the terrorist attacks of 9–11, for decades, it has harbored, sheltered, and sponsored terrorist organizations inside its borders; and within borders of areas it controls in Lebanon.

There are reports from reliable news sources, such as the respected Israeli newspaper, *Haaretz*, to the effect that Damascus has allowed some 150 to 200 al-Qaeda terrorists to settle in Palestinian refugee camps in southern Lebanon within the last year. We need to take these reports seriously and continuously monitor both sides for evidence of a relationship between the two.

I have been advised that Syria is a secular dictatorship and likely holds no affection for the fundamentalist views of al-Qaeda. Still, it has made common cause with Sunni extremists in Hamas and Shia extremists in Hezbollah.

My concern is whether Syria supports and sponsors any terrorist organization whatsoever. It is a quibble to me to say that Syria supports this terrorist organization, but not that one. Even if the question of al-Qaeda is open in the minds of some, we know for sure Damascus is a haven to more than one terrorist group.

Hezbollah is headquartered in Damascus and they effect a global threat by maintaining a terrorist network in Europe, Africa, South America, North American and Asia. They are the radical terrorist group that until 9–11 had claimed the most American lives in terrorist attacks.

It was Hezbollah who masterminded the bombing of the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Marine Barracks in Beirut in 1983 that killed more than 300 people, including 243 Americans. We also know that Hezbollah would not be able to launch attacks against Israel from southern Lebanon without Syrian acquiescence and approval, which brings me to the point of Syria's forceful control of Lebanon.

Since the early 1980s, Syria has maintained an illegal military occupation of southern Lebanon with 25,000 troops operating under the guise of maintaining peace between the factions. Syria has created a front line of terrorist incursion into Israel on Lebanon's border.

The U.S. National Commission on Terrorism reported last year that the Syrian government "still provides terrorists with safe haven; allows them to operate over a dozen terrorist-training camps in the Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley in Lebanon, and permits the Iranian government to resupply these camps."

It is also widely believed that the Bekaa Valley and Syrian-occupied Lebanon serve as the epicenter for training the world's most dangerous terrorists. The Bekaa is a one-stop shop for terrorist training. Terrorists from every corner of the international community come together in training camps to learn how to conduct lethal operations.

Terrorists learn how to transform themselves into suicide bombers. They also learn how to utilize various types of weapons, including long-range katyusha rockets, high-explosive anti-tank mines, and modern plastic explosives.

The effects of this comprehensive training can be seen in such devastating acts as the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing. Other attacks that originated from Bekaa Valley include the kidnapping and murder of former CIA bureau station chief William Buckley in 1984.

Such groups as al-Qaeda, Al-Jihad, Hamas, the Japanese Red Army, Abu Nidal's organization, Force 17, New People's Army, the IRA, Chechen rebels, Fatah, the Red Brigade, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Medellin Drug Cartel are just some of the terrorist organizations who have received training in the Bekaa valley and continue to operate there today.

Another factor of concern in Syria's illegal import of Iraqi oil through the pipeline in direct violation of U.N. Resolution 661 and subsequent resolutions prohibiting commerce with Iraq's oil and gas sector outside the Oil-for-Food Program. Syria imports about 200,000 barrels of Iraqi crude oil a day, allowing Damascus to sell more of its domestically-produced petroleum for profit and totaling approximately \$1.1 billion annual profit for both countries.

State Department spokesman Richard Bocher noted on February 14, 2002, that Syria is now a member of the United Nations Security Council. As such, it bears a special responsibility with regard to the implementation of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Given the seriousness of this oil pipeline issue, you can be sure that we will continue to press Syria to live up to its responsibilities to respect Security Council resolutions and to ensure that its actions contribute to international peace and security.

Unfortunately, Syria has not lived up to these expectations, nor has President Assad fulfilled a personal promise he made to Secretary of State Colin Powell on February 2001 that the pipeline earnings would be placed under the U.N. sanctions regime or alternatively, shut down.

Western intelligence sources have also discovered that Iraq is using Syria for smuggling in military systems and other banned material to Saddam Hussien. Iraqi opposition sources believe that Iraq has obtained medium-ranged SCUD-class missiles through Syria as part of Iraq's efforts to bolster its military against U.S. attack.

In addition, recent reports claim that Syria is brokering the sale of sophisticated Ukrainian military radar systems to Iraq. For the past decade, the Syrians have enhanced their ability to manufacture several hundred tons of chemical warfare agents per year, including sarin mustard gas and VX at four separate production facilities.

In addition to stockpiling chemical weapons, Syria has received, via Iran, hundreds of extend-ranged North Korean SCUD-C missiles and is building its own ballistic missiles from imported technology. These weapons are deployed in deep, well-protected underground shelters. Two years ago, Syria began testing a long-ranged SCUD-D missile able to hit any point in Israel from deep inside Syrian territory often undetectable to Israel radar.

The presence of these strategic weapons not only threatens the Israeli cities, but also could target Israel Defense Force military bases, and therefore, hinder Israel's ability to mobilize its army reserves quickly in the event of war. Longer ranged weapons systems allow the Syrians to hide their missiles deep in their own territory while still threatening our friends.

Mr. Chairman, you have already summarized what the legislation requires, and I think I've given a fairly comprehensive summary of why we hold this high concern about Syria. The fact of the matter is in the world of terrorist threat, you have to recognize that Syria is an actively-engaged perpetrator working in collusion with the world's most dangerous terrorist organizations.

First of all, it amazes me that they would be allowed to sit on the U.N. Security Council, but then, to have this callous disregard for the requirements of that council is an offense that the U.N. should not tolerate.

We, in the United States, cannot take all the other nations on the terrorist list and hold against them sanctions and let Syria continue unabated and unresponded. I believe I dare speak for both myself and Mr. Engel. Neither of us would have preferred to have been here today asking this Committee to act on this resolution.

Both of us would have preferred to have seen responsible behavior from Syria. We were both assured by many people that we ought to withhold from being here today because, as we were so assured, Syria is trying to do better.

Well, Mr. Chairman, I don't think Syria is trying to do better. I see no evidence that Syria is trying to do better. For us to hold sanctions against other nations on the terrorist list, and turn a blind eye to what is happening in Syria today, I think is an oversight that only invites other nations to duplicate their trespasses.

So I am here with my co-sponsor, Mr. Engel, and I think we can say again, both of us here, reluctantly, but with resolve, asking this Committee to move forward with this resolution. I thank you for your attention.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Armev follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE RICHARD K. ARMEV, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for inviting me to speak today on behalf of H.R. 4483, the Syria Accountability Act of 2002. Syria has been on the State Department's terrorist list since 1979. There are seven countries currently on the terrorist list. The United States has sanctions against and has broken normal relations with five of the seven nations on the list. Those five nations are: Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Libya, and Cuba. The House passed the Sudan Peace Act in response to its concerns with the sixth country, Sudan. Now, I come to speak about my concerns with the seventh, and question whether we should have normal, sanction-free relations with Syria.

As we continue to wage war on terrorism, Syria is a country that enjoys full diplomatic relations with the United States, trade relations with U.S. companies, and receives significant foreign aid from some of our closest allies, while simultaneously cuddling up to Saddam Hussein's regime, protecting some of the world's most active terrorist organizations within its borders, and repeatedly violating international law.

During my testimony today I will review the threats that Syria poses through its support of terrorism, its occupation of Lebanon, its development of weapons of mass destruction, and its illegal importation of Iraqi oil. These are threats to the United States and its allies around the world. Our inaction in holding Syria accountable for its dangerous activities could seriously diminish our efforts in the war on terrorism and our efforts in brokering a viable peace in the Middle East.

Syria should be held accountable for its record of harboring and supporting terrorist groups, stockpiling illegal weapons in an effort to develop weapons of mass destruction, and transferring weapons and oil back and forth through Iraq. In his June 24th speech, President Bush made a very clear statement of U.S. policy: "nations are either with us or against us in the war on terror." In that speech, he also laid down the gauntlet for Syria: "Syria must choose the right side in the war on terror by closing terrorist camps and expelling terrorist organizations."

A year has now passed, and the deadline for this choice has come and gone. The Congress of the United States cannot allow Syria to continue activities that pose a threat to the United States and our allies without consequence.

EVIDENCE OF SYRIA'S SUPPORT FOR TERROR:

While Syria publicly condemned the terrorist attacks of 9-11, for decades it has harbored, sheltered, and sponsored terrorist organizations inside its borders—and within the borders of areas it controls in Lebanon.

There are reports from reliable news sources, such as the respected Israeli newspaper "Ha'aretz", to the effect that Damascus has allowed some 150-200 al-Qaeda terrorists to settle in a Palestinian refugee camp in southern Lebanon within the last year. We need to take these reports seriously and continuously monitor both sides for evidence of a relationship between the two.

I have been advised that Syria, as a secular dictatorship likely holds no affection for the fundamentalist views of al-Qaeda, still, it has made common cause with both Sunni extremists in Hamas, and Shia extremists in Hezbollah. My concern is whether Syria supports and sponsors *any* terrorist organization at all. It is a quibble to me to say that Syria supports "this" terrorist organization but not "that" one.

Even if the question of al-Qaeda support is open in the minds of some, we know for sure Damascus is a haven to more than one terrorist group. Hezbollah is headquartered in Damascus and they effect a global threat by maintaining a terrorist network in Europe, Africa, South America, North America, and Asia. They are

the radical terrorist group that, until 9/11, had claimed the most American lives in terrorist attacks.

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Since the early 1980s, Syria has maintained an illegal military occupation of southern Lebanon with 25,000 troops operating under the guise of maintaining peace between factions. Syria has created a front line for terrorist incursion into Israel on Lebanon's border.

The U.S. National Commission on Terrorism reported last year that the Syrian government "still provides terrorists with safe haven, allows them to operate over a dozen terrorist training camps in the Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley in Lebanon, and permits the Iranian government to re-supply these camps."

It is also widely believed that the Bekaa Valley in Syria-occupied Lebanon serves as the epicenter for training the world's most dangerous terrorists. The Bekaa is a one-stop shop for terrorist training. Terrorists from every corner of the international community come together in training camps to learn how to conduct lethal operations. Terrorists learn how to transform themselves into suicide bombers. They also learn how to utilize various types of weapons, including long-range Katyusha rockets, high-explosive anti-tank mines and modern plastic explosives. The effects of this comprehensive training can be seen in such devastating acts as the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing. Other attacks that originated from the Bekaa Valley include the kidnapping and murder of former CIA Beirut station chief William Buckley in 1984.

Such groups as Al-Qaeda, Al-Jihad (Egyptian Islamic Jihad) Hamas, Hezbollah, the Japanese Red Army, Abu Nidal's organization, Force-17, New People's Army (Philippines), the IRA, Chechen Rebels, Fatah, the Red Brigade, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Medellin Drug Cartel are just some of the terrorist organizations who have received training in the Valley and continue to operate there today.

Illegal oil importation and Iraq:

Another factor of concern is Syria's illegal import of Iraqi oil through the Kirkuk-Banias pipeline, in direct violation of U.N. Resolution 661 and subsequent resolutions prohibiting commerce with Iraq's oil and gas sector outside the "oil-for-food" program.

Syria imports about 200,000 barrels of Iraqi crude oil a day, allowing Damascus to sell more of its domestically produced petroleum for profit, totaling approximately \$1.1 billion annual profit for both countries.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher noted on February 14, 2002, "Syria is now a member of the United Nations Security Council. As such, it bears a special responsibility with regard to implementation of U.N. Security Council resolutions. Given the seriousness of this [oil pipeline] issue, you can be sure that we will continue to press Syria to live up to its responsibilities to respect Security Council resolutions and to ensure that its actions contribute to international peace and security."

Unfortunately, Syria has not lived up to these expectations, nor has President Assad fulfilled a personal promise he made to Secretary of State Colin Powell in February 2001 that the pipeline earnings would be placed under the U.N. sanctions regime, or alternatively shut down.

Western intelligence sources have also discovered that Iraq is using Syria for smuggling military systems and other banned material to Saddam Hussein. Iraqi opposition sources believe that Iraq has obtained medium-range Scud-class missiles through Syria as part of Iraq's efforts to bolster its military against a U.S. attack. In addition, recent reports claim that Syria is brokering the sale of a sophisticated Ukrainian military radar system to Iraq.

Syria developing weapons of mass destruction

For the past decade, the Syrians have enhanced their ability to manufacture several hundred tons of chemical warfare agents per year, including sarin, mustard gas and VX, at four separate production facilities. In addition to stockpiling chemical weapons, Syria has received, via Iran, hundreds of extended-range North Korean Scud-C missiles, and is building its own ballistic missiles from imported technology. These weapons are deployed in deep, well-protected underground shelters. Two years ago, Syria began testing a longer-range Scud-D missile, able to hit any point in Israel from deep inside Syrian territory, often undetectable to Israeli radars.

The presence of these strategic weapons not only threatens Israeli cities, but could also target Israeli Defense Force military bases and thereby hinder Israel's ability to mobilize its army reserves quickly in the event of war. Longer-range weapons systems allow the Syrians to hide their missiles deeper in their own territory while still threatening our friends.

WHAT THE LEGISLATION REQUIRES:

Given the dangers the current Syrian regime poses to a variety of U.S. interests in the Middle East, the Syrian Accountability Act of 2002 was introduced in April of this year by Eliot Engel, my colleague and member of this Subcommittee, and me. This bill currently has over 155 cosponsors. I urge the Subcommittee to pass this important piece of legislation as quickly as possible.

In response to our knowledge of Syria's continuing activities, four criteria must be met by Syria in order for normal relations with the United States to return. The first criteria is an end to its support for terrorism, evidenced by closing the offices of the Palestinian terror groups, cleaning out the Lebanese Bekaa Valley, ending all contacts with and harboring of terrorist groups, and complying fully with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373. Secondly, Syria must withdraw its armed forces from Lebanon, complying with United Nations Security Council Resolutions 425 and 520. A halt to the development and procurement of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles is the third requirement. There is concern within the current Administration regarding the combination of Iraq's Scud missiles and weapons of mass destruction. Of equal concern is the Syrian force of hundreds of Scud missiles topped with unconventional warheads and the potential threat it poses. Lastly, Syria must halt violations of United Nations arms and oil sanctions against Iraq.

Unless the President can certify that Syria has ceased these dangerous activities, he must impose several penalties, including a ban on military and dual-use exports to Syria, and a ban on any financial assistance to U.S. businesses for their investment or other activities in Syria.

The President must also impose two additional penalties from a menu of six options that include: the prohibition of the export of U.S. products to Syria; the prohibition of U.S. businesses investing and operating in Syria; the restriction of Syrian diplomats in Washington, D.C. and at the United Nations in New York; the prohibition of any Syrian owned or controlled aircraft to take off, land, or fly over the United States, the reduction of U.S. diplomatic contacts with Syria, and the blockage of any property transactions under U.S. jurisdiction in which the Syrian government may have an interest. Virtually all of these sanctions are currently enforced against the other six countries on the U.S. terrorist list.

When Secretary of State Powell went to Syria last April, he sought to give a hard wake-up call to the Syrian people and their leaders that the United States was serious about its commitments to see through the war on terror. Instead, Powell's message fell on deaf ears, as masses of protesters carried pictures of Hezbollah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat while shouting in the streets, "Death to America, Death to Israel" and "We want to say the truth: We loathe America. Powell get out of here." The message he has since received from the Syrian government has been far more diplomatic, but unchanged.

I urge you to move swiftly in passing the Syria Accountability Act into law. Two months ago, the President urged Syria to take the right side in the war on terrorism. Congress should pass this legislation in an ongoing effort by the United States to convince Syria, a sitting member of the U.N. Security Council, to foster security instead of fostering war.

This bill provides both penalties and incentives for Syria to change its behaviour and it responsibly includes a national security waiver for most of the sanctions, as well as exemptions for food and medicine.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you, Majority Leader Armev. We appreciate your candid analysis of what is occurring in Syria today. And as we are engaged in our war on terrorism, it is especially important for us to consider all of the aspects of what you are setting forth before our Committee. We will assure that it will get full attention.

I know that you have a heavy schedule and have to be excused at this time, but we thank you for providing us with your testimony.

Mr. ARMEY. Thank you. My apologies to the Committee and to my kind co-sponsor, but I do have to rush to a leadership meeting.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you, again, Mr. Armey.

I want to welcome Congressman Eliot Engel, a distinguished Member of this Subcommittee, and a representative for the 19th District of New York which will soon include portions of my congressional district. Welcome, Mr. Engel.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ELIOT L. ENGEL, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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

Let me say the distinguished Majority Leader took credit for the discussion about your portrait. I want to go on record as saying that I'm the one that pointed it out to him.

Certainly, as I take in part of the district that you so wonderfully served all these years, I just want to say that you don't have big shoes to fill, you have impossible shoes to fill.

As a colleague of yours, I want to say how much I have cherished your friendship through these 14 years that I have served in Congress. Thank you very much for everything you've done for New York and for America.

Mr. GILMAN. I thank you for your kind words. Please, proceed.

Mr. ENGEL. It's a great honor for me to sponsor this bill along with the Majority Leader. It shows how this bill not only has such deep bipartisan support. It's certainly the right thing for us to do.

Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Subcommittee, the people of the United States are beginning a serious debate about undertaking a military campaign to effect a regime change in Iraq. Not only did Iraq occupy Kuwait in 1990, but it is on the State Department's list of terrorist nations, and is developing weapons of mass destruction. It consistently violates the U.N. Security Council sanctions adopted at the end of the Gulf War.

Yet while Iraq rightfully remains a national priority, we are overlooking another country which is committing comparable violations. This country is playing a similarly de-stabilizing role in the Middle East, and this country, of course, is Syria.

Syria has been on the State Department's terrorist list since the inception of the list in 1979. So it's always been on the State Department's list of countries that support, aid and abet terrorism.

Syria has occupied and controlled Lebanon for over 2 decades with 25,000 troops under the guise of maintaining peace between Lebanese factions. It possesses an expanding fleet of SCUD missiles, which can deliver its arsenal of chemical weapons, and it is in serious violation of the oil and arms sales sanctions against Iraq.

While we have no conclusive evidence of ties between Iraq and al-Qaeda, ties between Syria and al-Qaeda are widely reported. According to the highly regarded journalist, Ze'ev Schiff, Syria recently allowed 150 to 200 al-Qaeda operatives to enter a Palestinian refugee camp. I ask unanimous consent to submit a copy of this article for the record.

Mr. ISSA. I object.

Mr. ENGEL. Okay, I'm sorry my colleague objects, but I will state exactly what happened and the allegations which are more than allegations in the article.

In fact, terrorist groups that thrive within Syria, and Syrian-occupied Lebanon have taken American lives. In 1983 Hezbollah killed 241 U.S. Marines in a terrorist attack near Beirut, and killed many more in the bombing in the U.S. Embassy Annex the following year. Yet, today, Damascus continues to allow Iran to supply Hezbollah with weapons.

According to Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, and I quote,

“Hezbollah may well be the A-Team of terrorists. Maybe al-Qaeda is actually the B-Team on the reserve bench. The threat of collusion between these terrorist groups, and the government of Syria, must be addressed forcefully; especially, because of Syria’s arsenal of weapons of mass destruction.”

At the U.N. last week, President Bush said, and I quote,

“Our greatest fear is that terrorists will find a shortcut to their mad ambitions when an outlaw regime supplies them with the technologies to kill on a massive scale.”

That’s a quote from our President. He meant this about Iraq, but it applies just as well to Syria.

Under Secretary of State, John Bolton, said in May,

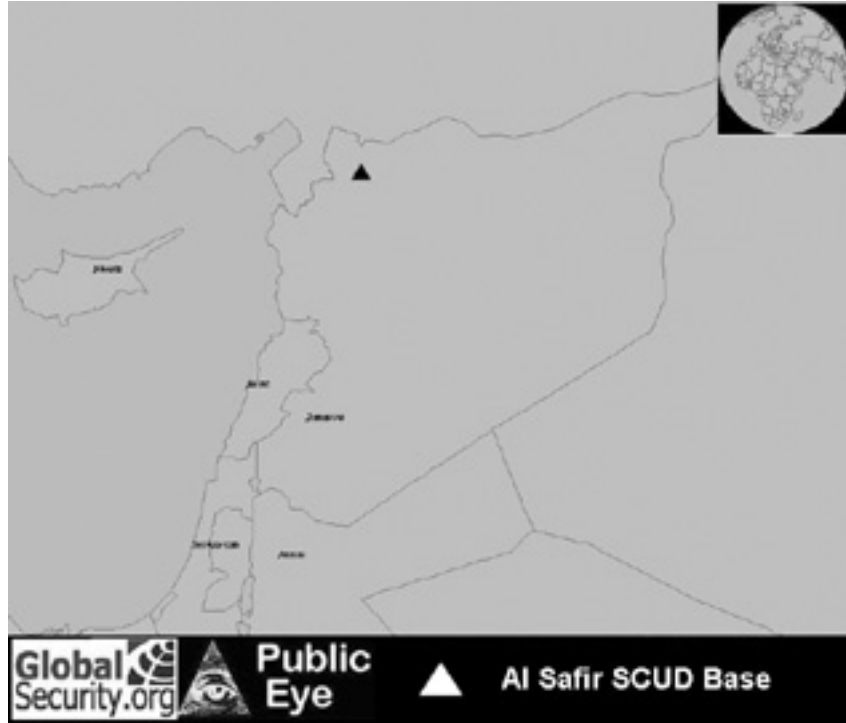
“We are concerned about Syrian advances and its chemical weapons infrastructure, and believe Syria is pursuing development of biological weapons and is able to produce, at least, small amounts of biological warfare agents.”

That’s from Under Secretary of State John Bolton. I share his concerns.

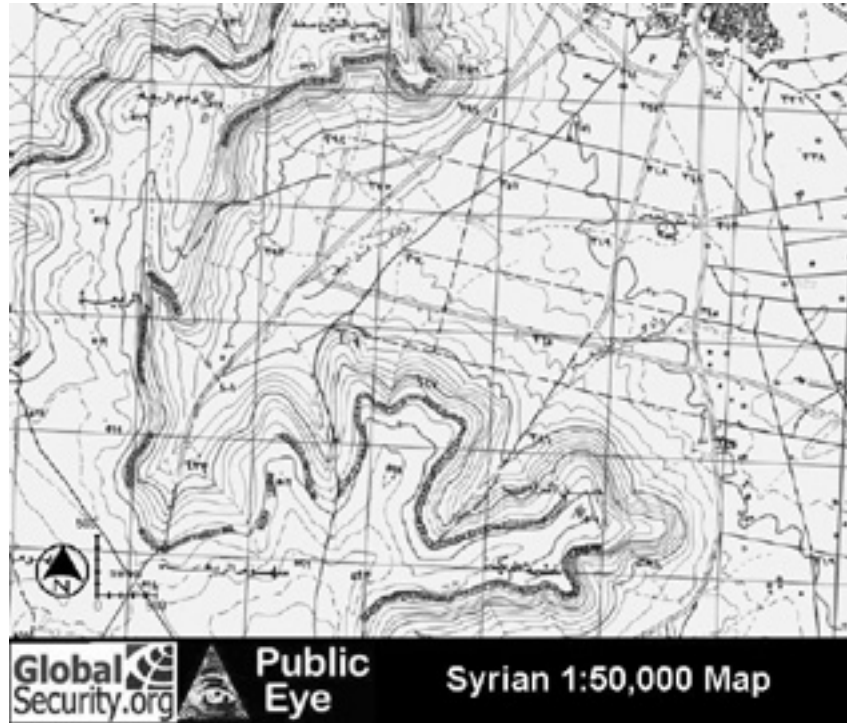
The following commercially available images released by Global Security.org show the Syrian Al-Safir chemical weapons plant and SCUD missile base protected by a surface-to-air missile site near the northern city of Aleppo.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to take a minute to run the Subcommittee through a few of these satellite photos. Number one, first, is a regional map, showing where the Al-Safir chemical weapons base is. Number two and number three are two maps. This Russian topographical map from 1987 shows the Al-Safir base.

[The information referred to follows:]







Mr. ENGEL. The Syrian map from 1994 of the same location omits the base. This is the Russian topographical of 1987 showing the base. The Syrian map of 1994 of the same location omits the base. My apologies to President Assad for exposing his nasty secret.

Fourth is an overview of the Al-Safir base, showing the chemical weapons plant, SCUD base and surface-to-air missile site. This is irrefutable. It's there under the auspices of the Syrian government. This fifth photo shows tunnel entrances large enough to hide a SCUD missile on its enormous Soviet-built MAZ 543 transporter. Again, these are aerial photos, not made up—irrefutable in terms of what Syria is doing.

[The information referred to follows:]





Mr. ENGEL. Additional photos and closeups are on the www.globalsecurity.org page. I would urge my colleagues to turn to that to get that information. Now even with all this damning evidence about the threat Damascus poses to the U.S. and the world, American diplomats suggest that now is not the time to get tough with Syria. The reasons they give vary, but the most common is that Syria has supposedly helped the U.S. in our war on terror.

But I would say, with all due respect, Mr. Chairman, Damascus is, at best, two-faced—throwing a few small bones of information to American sources, while continuing to aid the most violent terrorist groups in the Middle East.

This is certainly not an acceptable deal in the post-9–11 world. Syria must be put on alert that we are not fooled by their double-dealing. In our view there are four critical criteria that Syria must meet before our countries can return to normal relations.

First, and foremost, Syria must end its support for terrorism. I can think of nothing more important in the post-9–11 era. It must close the offices of the Palestinian terror groups in Damascus and clean out the Lebanese Bekaa Valley—a hornet's nest of the most deadly terrorist groups in the world. They can do this if they want to. They have shown no desire to do so.

Syria must end all contacts with al-Qaeda; stop harboring Hezbollah, a violent terrorist group and other terrorist groups, and come into full compliance with U.N. Security Council Resolution 1373, which directs all countries to fight terror.

Secondly, and very importantly, Syria must withdraw its armed forces from Lebanon. U.N. Security Council Resolutions 425 and 520 call for the removal of all foreign forces from Lebanon, and the strict respect for Lebanese sovereignty. The Lebanese people have a right to have their own government and their own nation and their own country without the strangle hold of Syrian troops occupying that country, in essence, making Lebanon no more than a puppet regime of Syria.

The U.N. has certified Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon, but the Syrian occupation remains, stealing from Lebanon its national wealth and political independence. As long as Syria continues its occupation, Lebanon will remain the only satellite state left in the world; one which will be doomed to be the world's hot bed of terror.

Mr. Chairman, and my colleagues, it's time to let the Lebanese run Lebanon. It's time for Syria to get out. It is incomprehensible that Syria became the President of the Security Council of the U.N. while occupying another country, and I'm sorry to say, without even a peep out of the Administration.

Mr. Chairman, on that point, I and almost 40 Members, including yourself, wrote to President Bush opposing Syria becoming the President of the Security Council. We didn't receive a response, but it's something that I think we should continue to emphasize.

Thirdly, Syria must halt development and procurement of weapons of mass destruction, and ballistic missiles. The Administration has correctly cited, as a cause for concern, the combination of Iraq's SCUD missiles and their weapons of mass destruction. The President has mentioned that as a concern, and I fully agree with him.

But we should be equally concerned with the Syrian force of hundreds of SCUD missiles topped with unconventional warheads that could also reap unspeakable destruction.

Finally, and of pressing importance to the United States, Syria must halt violations of United Nations arms and oil sanctions against Iraq. As the international community considers a major military operation against Saddam Hussein, Syria's delivery of weaponry to Iraq directly and immediately undermines American national security interests.

Indeed, Syria's illegal exports of 150,000 barrels of Iraqi oil per day have provided the substantial hard currency Saddam Hussein needs to purchase Syrian weapons; weapons that soon could be used against American and other soldiers.

As the Syrian threat increases, it has been our hope that the Administration would respond with a new policy toward Damascus—one that gets tough on the Syrian violations and sets clear conditions for Damascus to meet. That's what this bill does.

Until the Administration does this, our own war on terror and national security are diminished every day.

In closing, I would like to share one more quote from President Bush's U.N. speech.

"If an emboldened regime were to supply weapons of mass destruction to terrorist allies, then the attacks of September 11th would be a prelude to far greater horrors."

That's our President, and I agree with him. As an American and a New Yorker, I do not want to witness horrors worse than 9-11.

I urge the Administration to get tough on Syria. I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing today. I thank our Majority Leader for sponsoring this bill with me, and I think it's time for us in Congress to make a forceful statement and to move forward.

We will not tolerate Syrian support for terrorism. We will not tolerate Syrian occupation of Lebanon. We will not tolerate Syria making weapons of mass destruction; and we will not tolerate Syria's lack of compliance with the oil embargo against Iraq.

This bill will make sure that Syria is brought into compliance, or it will pay the price. I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Engel follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ELIOT L. ENGEL, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, the people of the United States are beginning a serious debate about undertaking a military campaign to affect a regime change in Iraq. Not only did Iraq occupy Kuwait in 1990, but it is on the State Department's list of terrorist nations, is developing weapons of mass destruction, and consistently violates the United Nations Security Council sanctions adopted at the end of the Gulf War.

Yet, while Iraq rightfully remains a national priority, we are overlooking another country which is committing comparable violations. This country is playing a similarly destabilizing role in the Middle East. This country is Syria.

Syria has been on the State Department's terrorist list since the inception of the list in 1979; it has occupied and controlled Lebanon for over two decades with 25,000 troops under the guise of maintaining peace between Lebanese factions; it possesses an expanding fleet of Scud missiles which can deliver its arsenal of chemical weapons; and, it is in serious violation of the oil and arms sales sanctions against Iraq.

While we have no conclusive evidence of ties between Iraq and al Qaeda, ties between Syria and al Qaeda are widely reported. According to the highly-regarded journalist Ze'ev Schiff, Syria recently allowed 150-200 al Qaeda operatives to enter a Palestinian refugee camp.

In fact, terrorist groups that thrive within Syria and Syrian-occupied Lebanon have taken American lives. In 1983, Hezbollah killed 241 U.S. Marines in a terrorist attack near Beirut and killed many more in the bombing of the U.S. embassy annex the following year. Yet, today, Damascus continues to allow Iran to supply Hezbollah with weapons. According to Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, "Hezbollah may well be the A-team of terrorists, maybe al Qaeda is actually the B-team on the reserve bench."

The threat of collusion between these terrorist groups and the government of Syria must be addressed forcefully—especially because of Syria's arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. At the U.N. last week, President Bush said, "our greatest fear is that terrorists will find a shortcut to their mad ambitions when an outlaw regime supplies them with the technologies to kill on a massive scale." He meant this about Iraq, but it applies just as well to Syria.

Undersecretary of State John Bolton said in May, "We are concerned about Syrian advances in its indigenous chemical weapons infrastructure and believe Syria is pursuing development of biological weapons and is able to produce at least small amounts of biological warfare agents." I share his concern.

The following commercially-available images, released by Global Security.org, show the Syrian Al Safir chemical weapons plant and Scud missile base protected by a surface to air missile site, near the northern Syrian city of Aleppo. Mr. Chairman, I would like to take a minute to run the Subcommittee through a few of these satellite photos:

- (#1) First is a regional map showing where the Al Safir Chemical Weapons base is.
- (#2) Second and (#3) third are two maps: This Russian topographical map from 1987 shows the Al Safir base. The Syrian map from 1994 of the same location—omits the base. My apologies to President Assad for exposing his nasty secret.
- (#4) Fourth, is an overview of the Al Safir base showing the chemical weapons plant, Scud base, and surface-to-air missile site.

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Even with all this damning evidence about the threat Damascus to the U.S. and the world, American diplomats suggest that now is not the time to get tough with Syria. The reasons they give vary, but the most common is that Syria has helped the U.S. in our war on terror.

But, Damascus is at best two-faced, throwing a few small bones of information to American sources while continuing to aid the most violent terrorist groups in the Middle East. This is not an acceptable deal in the post 9/11 world. Syria must be put on alert that we are not fooled by their double-dealing. In our view, there are four criteria that Syria must meet before our countries can return to normal relations.

First and foremost, Syria must end its support for terrorism. It must close the offices of the Palestinian terror groups in Damascus and clean out the Lebanese Bekaa Valley—a hornets nest of the most deadly terrorist groups in the world. It must end all contacts with al Qaeda, stop harboring Hezbollah and other terrorist groups, and come into full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 which directs all countries to fight terror.

Second, Syria must withdraw its armed forces from Lebanon. United Nations Security Council Resolutions 425 and 520 call for the removal of all foreign forces from Lebanon and the strict respect for Lebanese sovereignty. The U.N. has certified Israel's withdrawal, but the Syrian military occupation remains, stealing from Lebanon its national wealth and political independence. As long as Syria continues its occupation, Lebanon will remain the only satellite state left in the world, one which will be doomed to be the world's hotbed of terror. It's time to let the Lebanese run Lebanon.

It is incomprehensible that Syria became the President of the Security Council while occupying another country—without even a peep out of the Administration. Mr. Chairman, on that point, I and almost 40 members, including yourself, wrote to President Bush, opposing Syria becoming the President of the Security Council. We never received a response.

Third, Syria must halt development and procurement of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles. The current Administration has correctly cited as a cause for concern the combination of Iraq's Scud missiles and their weapons of mass destruction. We should be equally concerned with a Syrian force of hundreds of Scud missiles topped with unconventional warheads—that could also wreak unspeakable destruction.

Finally, and of pressing importance to the United States, Syria must halt violations of United Nations arms and oil sanctions against Iraq. As the international community considers a major military operation against Saddam Hussein, Syria's delivery of weaponry to Iraq directly and immediately undermines American national security interests. Indeed, its illegal exports of 150,000 barrels of Iraqi oil per day have provided the substantial hard currency Saddam needs to purchase Syrian weapons—weapons that soon could be used against American soldiers.

As the Syrian threat increases, it has been our hope that the Administration would respond with a new policy toward Damascus; one that gets tough on the Syrian violations and sets clear conditions for Damascus to meet. Until it does, our own war on terror and national security are diminished everyday.

In closing, I would like to share one more quote from President Bush's U.N. speech: "If an emboldened regime were to supply [weapons of mass destruction] to terrorist allies, then the attacks of September the 11th would be a prelude to far greater horrors." As an American and a New Yorker, I do not want to witness horrors worse than 9/11. I urge the Administration to get tough on Syria.

Mr. GILMAN. Well, we want to thank you, Mr. Engel, for producing this measure, for co-sponsoring it with our Majority Leader, Mr. Armey. We thank you for your analysis that you presented before the Committee. I have just one question, then I will turn to my colleagues.

It was in February 2001 that Secretary of State Powell said he had a commitment from President Assad to bring the Iraqi oil shipments under the U.N.-approved Oil-for-Food Program. Has Syria made any moves in that direction? If not, why has our Administra-

tion appeared to tolerate that violation of these kinds of sanctions that the U.N. has imposed on the part of Syria and Iraq?

Mr. ENGEL. Well, as far as we can see, there has been no movement by Syria to change its ways. In fact, quite the opposite, Syria is continuing to violate everything that the Administration says it wants to see in fighting the war on terror and in fighting the problems in Iraq.

I don't know why our State Department is turning a blind eye. We keep hearing that now is not the time, and I say, Mr. Chairman, if now is not the time, when will the time be?

As the Majority Leader pointed out, Syria is the only country on the State Department's list of countries which support terrorism with which we have normal diplomatic relations. I don't understand why, and I think it's time to send a very, very strong message to Syria that we won't tolerate these violations any further.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you, Mr. Engel. Mr. Ackerman?

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have an opening statement that I would like to put into the record if there is no objection.

Mr. GILMAN. Without objection.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I thank Mr. Engel for his leadership on this, together with the Majority Leader, and for making so eloquent and strong a statement.

I have a question about what you tried to do at the beginning of your statement, which was objected to in an unusual occurrence, I think. I can't remember the last time when a Member objected to a Member placing something in the record.

But were you referring to the article in *Haaretz*, the headline of which was "Syria has allowed hundreds of al-Qaeda men to settle in Lebanon," and which begins:

"Damascus has allowed some 150 to 200 al-Qaeda operators to settle in the Palestinian refugee camp on Ein-Hilweh near Sidon in Lebanon.

"The group including senior commanders arrived from Afghanistan to Damascus and Iran and directly to Lebanon. These Qaeda operatives are responsible, among other things, for the latest outbreak of fighting inside the refugee camp as part of the effort to take over the camp. These details and others have lately been gathered by various intelligent services.

"Among the new details now known, Mohammed Atta, leader of Qaeda group that conducted the September 11th airplane suicide attacks on the twin towers in New York, flying the first plane into the towers, visited Syria twice or three times. The Syrians did not give that information to the American of their own volition. Osma Bin Laden's son, Omar, left Syria——"

Mr. ISSA. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. GILMAN. Without objection.

Mr. ACKERMAN [continuing].

"Three weeks before the attack on the twin towers after receiving anonymous instructions to do so."

Is that the article that begins that way?

Mr. ENGEL. Yes, it is.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you. I have no further questions, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ackerman follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE GARY L. ACKERMAN, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Thank you Mr. Chairman for calling today's hearing on U.S.-Syrian relations. This is a topic which is well-deserving of a hearing and I commend you for gathering such an impressive group of witnesses, including the distinguished Majority Leader, Mr. Arney and our own colleague on the Subcommittee, our fellow New Yorker, Mr. Engel.

Mr. Chairman, if a man was wearing a black tuxedo, and in fact, everything he was wearing was black, except his white shirt, you and I would say without hesitation that the man was wearing black. However, at the State Department, I fear, on account of the white shirt, they'd say he's wearing gray. Perhaps, even dark gray.

Joking aside, the image of the man in the all-black tuxedo is the perfect image for analyzing Syrian behavior: a uniform of black with a single, but central patch of white.

Syrian acts and policies contrary to U.S. national interests are numerous, serious and ongoing. First, and most obviously, Syria is a state-sponsor of terror.

Damascus is a willing—even a proud—sanctuary for terrorists from several different groups. In its most recent annual report on terrorism, the State Department acknowledged that Syria continued to provide safehaven and logistics support for Palestinian terrorist groups in Damascus, as well as providing Hizballah, HAMAS, PFLP-GC, the PIJ, and other terrorist organizations refuge and basing privileges in Lebanon's Beka'a Valley.

Syria is also behaving in a grossly irresponsible fashion in Lebanon, a country it has occupied since 1976 contrary to international law, the will of the Lebanese people, and the Taif accords, which Syria pledged to honor. Notably, Syria has recently begun to supplement Iranian arms transfers to Hizballah with its own artillery rockets.

This Syrian collaboration with Hizballah is not only repugnant, since Hizballah is a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization that is responsible for the deaths of dozens of Americans, but it is also extremely dangerous.

Hizballah is actively trying to stoke a larger Arab-Israeli conflict through incessant attacks on Israeli positions on Mt. Dov—territory that both our government and the U.N. have declared explicitly is not Lebanese. Syria's response to this effort to incite a regional war has been to provide more and more deadly arms to Hizballah. This reckless and unacceptable policy should provoke a commensurate response from our government. To my knowledge, it has not.

Syria, as the responsible party for the security situation in Lebanon, must also account for allegations that recent violence in the Ein Hilwe refugee camp is the result of the infiltration of possibly hundreds of Al-Qaida elements into Lebanon in cooperation with Syria's favorite terrorist ally, Hizballah.

Syria is also reportedly flaunting U.N. resolutions on Iraq by engaging in illicit trade in Iraqi oil and supplying Iraq with military weapons and spare parts. At a time when our country is debating the necessity of sending our men and women in uniform to uproot Saddam Hussein and his regime by force of arms, Damascus is cooperating with Baghdad in ways that could cost American lives. Moreover, despite a pledge made by President Bashar al-Asad to Secretary of State Powell, that Syria would handle any oil shipments from Iraq in accordance with the U.N.-approved oil-for-food program for Iraq, there is no evidence yet that Syria has complied with this commitment.

And of course, as it has since for several decades, contrary to its explicit commitments given in numerous international agreements, Syria is continuing to acquire and develop weapons of mass destruction and the means for their delivery.

As Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John R. Bolton noted on May 6, Syria has a stockpile of the nerve agent sarin and is conducting research and development on the more toxic nerve agent VX; Syria has produced small amounts of biological warfare agents; and Syria is pursuing further development of its surface-to-surface missiles.

Put together, the support for terrorism, the occupation of Lebanon, the irresponsible support for Hizballah's war-mongering, the not-so-subtle alliance with Iraq and the pursuit of weapons of terror, make it is easy to understand why Syria is subject to so many sanctions under U.S. law.

What is not clear to me is why Syria has been able to get away with so much. Unfortunately, the pressure to hold Syria accountable has come uniformly and almost exclusively from Congress. The legislation introduced by Representatives Armev and Engel is just the latest demonstration of Congress' refusal to despair of changing Damascus' behavior.

This is not too big a nut to crack. Syria is a small, decrepit, little terror state that has been yanking our diplomatic chain for years. Without the patronage of the Soviet Union, Syria has continued to shrink from Third-World leader to Third-World backwater. The Syrian people live in a police state which seems to exist for the sole purpose of propping up a failed government. Syria's throw-back statist economy is broken, and utterly unattractive to foreign direct investment.

And yet we are told by administration after administration, year after year, that Congressional action would be "unhelpful," and that quiet diplomacy will win the improvements in Syrian conduct we desire. After 20 years in Congress I can say the "Trust me. We'll take care of it" routine doesn't impress me.

We read in the newspapers—the only source of information for the Congress about the Administration's high-level foreign policy debates—that Syria can't be pressured because they are providing critical cooperation in our war against Al-Qaida.

Indeed, it has been reported that information provided by Syria enabled us to prevent a major attack on our forces and saved U.S. lives. This act alone, it is said, kept Syria from being included in the Presidents' "axis of evil." If true, this fact is, as I previously suggested, the white shirt. But one white shirt doesn't create shades of gray; it only presents vivid contrast with clothing of uniform darkness. One act of truly useful cooperation only demonstrates the potential for the U.S.-Syrian relationship, what could be if the scores of other acts of violence, irresponsibility and terror were stopped immediately.

Mr. Chairman, too little has been done for too long about this very serious problem in the Middle East. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about how to begin to remedy this critical situation.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Issa?

Mr. ISSA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In way of explanation, objecting to an article became necessary, to be honest, because our witness distributed a "Dear Colleague" that attempted to say that this was fact. I took it on myself, as I'm sure many of us have, and hopefully, Mr. Engel has, to go to the State Department to find out whether or not there was any basis for this. Finding none, I have to say that our information from our State Department does trump an article being considered to be a fact.

That doesn't change the fact that many parts of the article are undoubtedly correct, and that I am extremely concerned that we are missing the point of how to move Syria's behavior by assuming that a sanction will do some good.

I oppose this sanctions act, not because Syria is a good actor; not because Syria is in compliance with the U.N. resolutions, but because Syria is, in fact, a nation we do have diplomatic relations with; and one in which our State Department—my President, my Secretary of State—have said they are getting movement in a direction they want to get.

The last time I checked, none of us has the status of Ambassador, nor the training as Ambassadors. So I oppose this sanction based on it tying the President's hands.

If I could, Mr. Engel, ask you have you had any briefings as to whether or not the portion about al-Qaeda being in some way directly linked to support by Syria is, in fact, true?

Mr. ENGEL. Well, let me first say, Mr. Issa, that the letter to which you are refer that I sent around—a "Dear Colleague" was done, not only by myself, but with Mr. Armev, the Majority Leader. It was joint letter that we both sent around, and while you may disagree with the bill and you may disagree with my statement,

quite frankly I am shocked that you would object to unanimous consent to putting this article in the record.

Mr. ISSA. As I said, I am objecting to an article that has only been alleged to be true by reports being taken as fact. You have been a good colleague and a good friend. In this particular case we seem to disagree, not on the principle of whether Syria is occupying Lebanon; whether Syria is trading in oil with Iraq; whether Syria is a conduit for weapons coming from the Czech Republic, Belarus and from other former Soviet satellites who, also, are violating arms rules. I am not disagreeing with any of that.

What I am asking you is when this letter came out, it supports a specific small portion of it. I would say that most of this is very true. There is a big question if so much as one al-Qaeda operative is being harbored by Syria with any knowledge or support of the government leadership; then there is no question that we need to take immediate and assertive action at a higher level; perhaps, more than these sanctions.

But do you have knowledge from U.S. sources on this subject? Have you gone to the trouble of having a briefing, or, are we just reading an Israeli newspaper?

Mr. ENGEL. No, I think it's a little more than reading an Israeli newspaper. I think that given Syria's record of support for Hezbollah; of support for terrorism; of letting terrorist have training camps; of having funding for terrorists. It's not very difficult to make the jump to say that if Syria is supporting Hezbollah and turning a blind eye to its terrorist activities, they are doing the same with al-Qaeda.

Mr. ISSA. I will take that as a no, Mr. Engel.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. BERMAN. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. ISSA. Just one—I would ask, Mr. Chairman, that all of our opening statements be placed in the record without objection.

Mr. GILMAN. Without objection.

Mr. ISSA. And I would yield.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you.

Mr. ISSA. I will yield to the gentleman from New York first.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you. I am rather concerned, not necessarily with the issue, but with the protocol, which is a broader thing. The gentleman from California who, indeed, is my friend and for whom I have the highest regard, maybe setting the bar a little bit too low.

If we are going to object to placing things in the record that we think may or may not be entirely true and censor them ourselves, for whatever reason, including that it appeared in an Israeli newspaper rather than some other constitutional document from some other country or our country, I think that the record would be very, very thin because we would be spending all of our time objecting to anything that anybody would ever disagree with in whole or in part.

Mr. ISSA. Reclaiming my time, now that we have had sufficient dialogue on the subject, I would ask unanimous consent that this article in its entirety into the record. I do not object.

Mr. GILMAN. Without objection.

Mr. ISSA. The gentleman from California, if you don't mind, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BERMAN. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and giving his position. I just want to put on the record that the author of this article, Ze'ev Schiff, is one of the most distinguished, well-respected and accurate military correspondents, certainly, in Israel, but I think, generally, among the universe of military correspondents, he is widely respected for the accuracy of his reporting and the tremendous breadth and depth of his contacts.

The article, of course, does not say that Syria is currently harboring—it is saying that Syria allowed these people to go through Damascus to the Palestinian refugee camp near Sidon, which is not directly under Syrian control. But this particular reporter is uniquely well-respected.

Mr. ISSA. Thank you. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Wexler?

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you Mr. Chairman, and if I understand it correctly, all of our opening statements have been put in the record.

Mr. GILMAN. Without objection.

Mr. WEXLER. I want to just simply congratulate and concur with Mr. Engel. I think he laid out a very important and impressive case for the need for this piece of legislation. I don't think there is any reason to publicly repeat what Mr. Engel has so eloquently laid out.

I would simply add one or two additional observations, if I could. And that is, why has the situation deteriorated to the point that it has in Syria? Unfortunately, the only conclusion that one can reach is that we all had great hopes for Bashar Assad, we had a hope that he was a new kind of leader in the region, given his background—what would appear to be an impressive education; what appeared to be his stress of improving economic conditions in Syria.

None of that, unfortunately, has turned out to be reality. And what has turned out to be reality, at least, until this date in Syria is we have what appears, through his actions, to be an immature and irresponsible man who is now being guided, not by anything other than the hard-line interest in Syria.

And as been stated by Mr. Engel and Mr. Armev, he, individually, presents what may be, in my view, the most dangerous obstacle in the Middle East; both with respect to Iraq; both with respect to Hezbollah and his absolute condemnation, by action, of any kind of peace process whatsoever.

He, in fact, Bashar Assad, is one of the principal obstacles to a meaningful peace process. And until we realize that fact, and until that fact is reflected in the way the United States deals with him, I am fearful that other avenues of possibilities will never be realized because there is a tremendous drain on those possibilities in the person of Bashar Assad.

Everything that the United States, from President Bush on down, has alleged with respect to Iraq at the Security Council in the United Nations is also true—and in many respects, even more true, in a greater dynamic with respect to Syria.

All of the things that the President and the United States is demanding of Yasir Arafat, and of his activities, can be compounded by many degrees with respect to Syria.

I support what we are alleging and asking for with respect to action against Iraq; and I support what we have alleged and the actions we are asking—demanding of Yasser Arafat—actually, of the Palestinians.

But what seems to be not in compliance with the overall American policy is that we are not doing the same thing with respect to Syria, even though, in many cases the case is clearer against Syria than it is against the other actors.

With, I think, one message to our friends in the moderate, Arab world—I would ask our friends in the moderate, Arab world, who many of us on this Committee—not all of us, but many of us may have a different view in terms of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but I would ask our friends in the moderate, Arab world with the indignation that they sometimes bring to the Israeli-Palestinian debate, to bring that same level of indignation—even greater—to the issue of the Syrian occupation of Lebanon.

There is no excuse why the Arab world is not revolting over the Syrian occupation of Lebanon. Why are there not Arab conferences? Why are there not TV shows all over Al-Jazeera television describing what Syria is doing to Lebanon?

That has nothing to do with the United States. It's not caused by America. It's not caused by Western interest. It's not caused by Israel. There are no more even so-called excuses anymore. Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon. That's official. Even the United Nations has sanctioned it.

It's time, I would respectfully suggest to our friends in the Arab world to put a real spotlight on what is occurring, emanating from Syria and the injustices that are being, as a result, perpetuated in Lebanon.

It's time, as Mr. Engel very eloquently said, as did Mr. Armev, for the Lebanese for themselves to rule Lebanon. It's time for Syria to get out. It's time for Bashar Assad to clean up his act. It's time for him to approach the peace process with a more mature and practical attitude.

And until he does so, the President and our Administration and the United States should call it what it is. Syria is not a friend of the United States. It is nothing other than an obstacle to peace, and it is one of the primary supporters of terrorism in the world. And until we fix that, we will not even begin to get a handle on the problem of terrorism that effects us, the United States, and our closest allies in the region. Thank you very much.

Mr. GILMAN. The gentleman's time has expired, and I thank the gentleman. [Applause.]

I am asking our audience not to express their feelings during the testimony, and please no flash photos. They are not permitted during testimony.

Mr. Cooksey?

Mr. COOKSEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is good to have you in front of the Committee, Mr. Engel.

I have actually a series of questions I would like to ask, and would like to get through all of them. So any time you can, if you can just give me a yes or no answer.

Is the primary purpose or reason for the Syria Accountability Act Syria's ties to terrorists?

Mr. ENGEL. That is one of the primary reasons. The other would be, as Mr. Wexler just mentioned, the occupation of Lebanon; the fact that they are violating the oil sanctions against Iraq and the fact that they are producing weapons of mass destruction. I would say those four pillars.

Mr. COOKSEY. Thank you. Well, I abhor terrorism. I think all terrorists are either cowards or crazy or all of the above—period, end quote. It's the most cowardly act that any human being can do to another human being.

But I would point out with a very superficial review of history that there is a long history of terrorism in that part of the world—all parties, all countries, all religions and they are all cowardly acts. So I agree and I hope you do.

Now to comment on President Bashar Assad—there is no question that the history was not good under his father. His father was military man. I never met his father. I have met the last three Prime Ministers of Israel, and I think they're fine people and have some merit.

I have met Arafat, and he has his supporters. I have met his leaders, and yet, Bashar Assad is a physician. And being a physician, I think he has the opportunity to be a kinder, gentler leader and will move Syria in the right direction.

I happened to have met with him last year with a delegation in Damascus, and I think he is, hopefully, the type of young, new leader they will have over there. I really think that they need to get rid of people that have either a military background or a terrorist background or a political background and have more people from business—I met all the leaders of Lebanon.

They are all three—two of the three of them are businessmen, and very successful businessmen; and hopefully, that will be the direction that the Middle Eastern countries go to.

My third question—do you think this is the time bring this Syria Accountability Act at a time that we are preparing for war against Iraq? And then, my last series of questions is, number one, has the President asked for this legislation? Has the White House asked that this legislation be tabled or defeated?

Does Syria directly threaten the United States at this time, because our primary responsibility as Members of Congress is our allegiance and our loyalty to the United States. So my question is, does Syria directly threaten the United States, and has the President asked for this legislation?

Mr. ENGEL. I tried to write down the questions, and I hope I got them—

Mr. GILMAN. If I might interrupt, we have a distinguished panel waiting for us, and I am going to ask our colleague to be considerate so we can get on to the panel. If you would keep your remarks as short as possible. Mr. Engel?

Mr. ENGEL. Yes. Let me say that I don't think there is another country in the world, in my opinion, that harbors terrorists to the

depth that Syria does. I think we would be hard pressed to find it. In fact, I believe that Syria, even more than Iraq, has been aiding and abetting terrorism and harboring terrorists.

Bashar Assad—I think that many of us had high hopes for him just like King Abdullah of Jordan. I think King Abdullah of Jordan has risen and shown that he is a young man who is moderate and has vision. Unfortunately, in my estimation, Bashar Assad has shown that he is even worse than his father, who was no friend to the United States for many, many years. It has been very, very sad that he has not, unlike King Abdullah, moved up to the task in my estimation.

I believe this is the right time. I believe that as we are facing the threat in Iraq, and going after terrorists in al-Qaeda, this is the right time to say to all countries which harbor terrorists that we are not going to tolerate it any more.

Finally, the Administration does not support this bill as previous Administrations have not supported any bills that the Congress has come up with because the Administration generally believes that it's their purview to conduct foreign policy, and generally, rejects anything that the Congress does.

When we had the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act, it was also opposed by Administrations, as have all these kinds of acts been opposed. So this is no different. The Administration will say that they share our goals. They think what we're trying to do is the right thing, but they don't think this is the right way to do it. This is not the right time.

I have heard this from the State Department in the 14 years I have been in Congress. To them, I would say, if this is not the right time when we are embarking on a campaign to fight terrorism, then I don't know when the right time will ever be.

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

Mr. COOKSEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Engel.

Mr. GILMAN. Ms. Berkley? And I am going to, again, ask our Members to please be brief so we can get on to the next panel.

Ms. BERKLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will also submit my opening statement for the record.

Mr. GILMAN. Without objection.

Ms. BERKLEY. I want to thank you, Mr. Engel, for coming forward at this time. I agree with you that if not now, when? Not only do I agree with the contents and substance of the Accountability Act, I am very thankful for your passion on this issue that I share.

I also recall when Assad took over from his father, and the belief I had that, perhaps, this was a turning point in the relationship in the Middle East. And with his Western education that people were touting, that he might become a kinder and gentler leader.

But I don't care if he's a doctor, a lawyer, a plumber, a carpenter—this is not a kinder and gentler leader. This is a kinder and gentler terrorist, and we don't need another one of those.

He is no different from his father; perhaps, even worse because he should know better. This is a disgrace that this country isn't standing up to this terrorist and making sure that this type of behavior is not only condemned, but eliminated.

So I want to thank you very much. I do have questions, but I think I will hold them for the next panel. I appreciate the fact that you have the guts to sit here and share with us your concerns.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you, Ms. Berkley.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Chabot?

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the interest of time in getting to the next panel, I think I will hold my questions to the next panel as well.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chabot. Mr. Rohrabacher?

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I find myself in agreement and disagreement with the proponents of this legislation. Eliot and Mr. Wexler, of course, have made this point that Syria in some way should be castigated for what it is doing, and what it has done in Lebanon. And having visited Lebanon, and talked to all the parties in Lebanon, I found all of them grateful to Syria for coming into their country at a time when it was totally chaotic.

I have been to Lebanon several times, and I have had a broad range of discussions—as broad a range of discussions as you can have, and I don't know; perhaps, obviously, Lebanon should be free and independent of Syrian occupation eventually, but let's not forget the tragedy that was going on there prior to the Syrian invasion.

That in no way, of course, justifies the Syrian harboring of terrorists, which they obviously do. So I find myself in agreement with the idea that we have to put pressure on Syria and we should do so officially and we should make sure we are uncompromising, which is what I believe you are trying to do here to make sure that they know that if any country harbors warriors who are making war on women and children and blowing up bar mitzvahs in Israel or organizations that set up bombs in Pizza Huts—that country should not be a friend of the United States.

They have to know they are making war, not just on people who eat pizza at Pizza Huts in Israel, but they are making war on all civilized people. So I agree with your goal in trying to put pressure on Syria for that.

But again, let's make sure we try to be fair in terms of what was going on historically in terms of what Syria did in Lebanon. If you want them to take us seriously about not harboring terrorists, we have to try to be accurate in terms of what happened historically in Lebanon.

I think there is a difference between Syria and Iraq. Syria is not headed by a man who holds a blood grudge against the United States. Saddam Hussien holds a blood grudge against us, and I think that he means to do us harm. Syria is harboring terrorists who attack Israel, and as such, is not a friend of the United States or a friend anybody who opposes terrorism.

So with that said, I am probably going to support the legislation, but I do think that there are some things that we need to put in a little bit more better perspective. Thank you, Eliot.

Mr. ENGEL. Let me just say to my friend and colleague that we certainly share the goals of this legislation in terms of fighting terrorism and getting Syria to stop its support of terrorism.

But the Lebanese people who have come to Washington that I have spoken with; particularly, the Christians, don't welcome Syrian occupation of their country. They believe that Syria should leave.

Syria, in my estimation, is in violation of the Taif Accord where they agreed to pull their troops out of Lebanon and U.N. Resolution 520 passed in 1982. Section 4 calls, again, for the strict respect of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the government of Lebanon through the Lebanese army throughout Lebanon and I would just say—

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Eliot, can I ask a question?

Mr. ENGEL. If I could just finish. I would just say that the Syrian army undermines Lebanese sovereignty and prevents the Lebanese from running their own country. And if you really speak with many of the groups; particularly, the Christian groups in Lebanon, they all want the Syrians out of Lebanon.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Eliot, what was the death rate going on in Lebanon of violent killings prior to the Syrian evasion?

Mr. ENGEL. I think—

Mr. ROHRABACHER. We are talking about a massive blood-letting that was stopped. I am not saying we should forgive Syria for any of its faults, and believe me, I'm with you on their support of terrorism, and I have made that point to them personally.

I just don't think we are being accurate here, and I have talked to Christian leaders in Lebanon. People are shaking their head, I'm sorry. I have. I have been there twice.

I met with all of the Christian leaders, and while they are officially telling us, yes, we want the Syrian occupation to be over; unofficially, they are acknowledging that before the Syrians came in, people were slaughtering each other in the streets. It doesn't take a genius to take a look at what was going on there.

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

Mr. ENGEL. If I might just—

Mr. GILMAN. The gentleman's time has expired. I am trying to preserve time for our panel. By unanimous consent, a non-member of our Subcommittee, Ms. McKinney.

Ms. MCKINNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I only have one question, and I will be brief. I just would like to ask my colleague, on September 25th, the governor of Minnesota, Jessie Ventura, is going to lead a delegation to Cuba.

I am just looking at this article, "Walls Around Cuba are Cracking," and basically, there are a couple of quotes I would like to read here.

One is a question along the lines of what Congressman Cooksey asked. And that is, "Is there any corporation in America that would cling to the same failed business practice for 40 years?"

That is speaking about the U.S. embargo of Cuba. Further, a Member of the House goes on to say that the problem with our policy is that we elevate Castro. We allow him to blame us for all the failures of socialism.

If we will simply empower people over there, through commerce and trade and interaction, we can move around him. so my question is, is there another strategy short of embargo and sanctions—

sanctions that can move United States and Syria where they need to be. And if there is no other strategy, why do you think that there is no other strategy?

Mr. ENGEL. Well, let me say that as Majority Leader Armev and I pointed out in our testimony, since 1979, when the State Department first put forward its list of countries which aid and abet terrorism, Syria has been on that list since the inception—since 1979.

We have heard a series of Administrations say, well, let us handle Syria diplomatically, and hopefully, we can get it to change its ways. In the 23 years, I have not seen any change in the ways of Syria. In fact, I've seen it get worse.

When Hafez Assad, Bashar Assad's father, ran Syria and then died, we all had hope that when the son took over it would be a new generation—Western educated and that he would not follow the policies of his father.

What we have seen in the few years that he has ruled Syria with an iron fist, he is actually worse than his father because his father was stronger and could make certain decisions, where he appears to be very, very weak and relies on the ultra-hard liners in Syria.

So I believe they've regressed and we have no choice but to put forward this legislation to give them the opportunity to change their ways because they've shown no desire to do it otherwise.

I do think that the Congress has a responsibility to help guide our country in foreign policy, and this is one the ways that we do it. So I would say that I put forward this legislation really as a last resort out of frustration that Syria, if anything, is getting worse not better.

Ms. MCKINNEY. Mr. Chairman, I promised only one question, but I do have a follow up. I have not visited Syria, but if Bashar is weak—and significantly weaker than his father and we make war in Iraq and we make sanctions on Syria, don't we contribute to increased turmoil and tension in the area?

As a result of that, there are discussions that there will be potential for civil war in Saudi Arabia. There are all kinds of things that are being postulated as we embark upon this war.

Do we do more damage to the neighbor or to the region by moving in this way, or is there possibly another way that is through diplomacy that we can move our two countries to a closer position?

Mr. ENGEL. Well, we've tried diplomacy, as I mentioned, for 23 years and it hasn't worked. When I look at countries that harbor terrorism, I frankly think Syria has a worse record than Iraq.

I think Syria probably has the worst record of any country in the world; perhaps, other than Iran. And so, if we are going to make terrorism the goal, it doesn't make sense to me that we are somehow moving into Iraq, but we're looking the other way when it comes to Syria.

I think, as the President rightly said, that you are either with us or with the terrorists. We have to fight terrorism wherever it rears its ugly head, and frankly, I think Syria is at the top of the pack when it comes to terrorism.

Mr. GILMAN. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Ms. MCKINNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GILMAN. We will now proceed with the next panel. Mr. Engel, we thank you for your patience. We ask if you will join our

Committee back in your normal seat. Thank you for your testimony.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GILMAN. We now call Panel No. 3. Unfortunately, Ambassador David Sattlefield, as I mentioned earlier, Deputy Assistant of the Secretary of State for the Bureau of Middle East Affairs is unable to be here with us today. His statement will be entered into the record, and we will endeavor to hear him at a later date.

We will now call on the next panel, Ambassador Edward Gabriel, Matthew Levitt, William Reinsch, and Elias Saadi.

We will hear from our panelists. I will call on Elias Saadi first. I am going to ask our panelist if they would restrict their statements to 5 minutes, so that we can get through the entire panel. We will put your entire statement into the record.

Dr. Elias Saadi was born in Youngstown, Ohio in 1932. He earned his M.D. degree from Georgetown University in 1957. He has been private practice in cardiology in Youngstown until retiring in the Year 2000 after 30 years. Dr. Saadi has been active in social, religious and political organizations to work for the cause of freedom and democracy in Lebanon.

Dr. Saadi, please proceed.

STATEMENT OF ELIAS SAADI, COUNCIL OF LEBANESE AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS

Dr. SAADI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning. I would like to enter my text into the record, and I will summarize my remarks.

Mr. GILMAN. Without objection.

Dr. SAADI. I enter into the record a list of organizations that support my position—14 in all.

Mr. GILMAN. Without objection.

Dr. SAADI. My name is Elias Saadi of Youngstown, Ohio. I have come here as an American citizen of Lebanese descent to explain my view, and that of the vast majority of Lebanese-Americans that this bill is good for America.

Mr. Chairman, we have asked for this bill out of desperation and frustration due to the lack of a comprehensive American policy to end the Syrian occupation of Lebanon. For 25 years the Syrian army has occupied once-democratic Lebanon, and imposed its will through intimidation, persecution, assassination and brute military force.

Some examples—first, 2 weeks ago, Syria forcibly shut down the opposition television station MURR TV. The reason? Debating the question of Syrian withdrawal. Two, Syria condones al-Qaeda's presence in Lebanon and provides support, finances, arms, training, and headquarters to Hezbollah, the PFLP-General Command Hamas, and Islamic Jihad. In all, 11 terrorist organizations are listed as such by the U.S. government are based in Damascus, but operate out of Lebanon.

Third, Syrian-sponsored groups are responsible for numerous terrorist attacks against the U.S., including the bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in occupied Lebanon in 1983, which killed 241 American Marines.

There is also a personal face to this terror, Mr. Chairman. In Lebanon, the Syrian internal police have instilled fear, intimidation, helplessness in every man, woman and child. Internal security forces beat, torture and imprison students who voice their support for sovereignty, political reform and free speech.

Mr. Chairman, there is urgency to this measure. People are starving and the youth are leaving in droves. Forced to choose between immigration and life in a country ruled in the “axis of evil” and their surrogate, Hezbollah.

Let’s look at the arguments against the bill. The Department of State agrees with the goals underlying the bill, but has concerns about its timing. I might ask: What is a good time to stop cooperating with a global terrorist? It has never been our national policy to negotiate with terrorists or to accede to their demands. Syria maybe cooperating today, but the past record for 25 years shows that its friendship has been most fickle.

It has been said that sanctions never work. Cuba, Iran and Iraq are held up as examples of their ineffectiveness, but sanctions worked in South Africa, and sanctions may yet be the harbinger of the political restlessness that is sure to bring eventual change in Cuba, Iraq and Iran. Symbolic, though they may be, sanctions provide a glimpse into an undesirable future for Syria; and thus, can both be a carrot and a stick.

It has been said that passage of the bill would cost American jobs, but it is certain that not passing the bill will cost American lives.

This Committee should ask, also, the following questions—how much in dollars did the attack on 9–11 cost America? How much would another attack cost? How much trade is enough to make up for the impact of terrorism? In my view, no amount of trade is worth the price of even one American life.

It is said that Syria will leave Lebanon voluntarily. Let’s not fool ourselves.

The Taif Agreement clearly called for departure, but that day has never come, nor will it until Syria has a strong incentive. The only language that Syria understands is the explicit language of cause and effect, such as Secretary Powell’s stern warning that if Syria did not stop the scimmages on the blue line at the Shebaa Farms, Israel would.

Thus, this bill will strengthen, not weaken, the Administration’s position in its negotiations with Syria.

It has also been inferred that sanctions will drive Syria closer to our enemies, Iraq and Iran. I ask, how much closer to our enemies can Syria, the sponsor of 11 terrorist organizations be?

It has been said that Syria has provided us with information that has saved American lives, but has Syria given us enough information to save as many American lives as they are responsible for taking or will certainly take in the future—absolutely not.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, in the name of freedom, and with all of the urgency and fervor that I can muster as an American citizen of Lebanese descent, I urge you to lend your support to this bill.

Syria must be made to end its sponsorship of terrorism and its occupation of Lebanon or be held accountable. This act aims to

achieve these ends that are undeniably in the interest of the United States of America.

In closing, I ask your indulgence to allow me a personal observation, Mr. Chairman. A small tragic, personal note—during one visit to Lebanon, among many I have made, during the heat of the war, I was informed by the intelligence services of the anti-Syrian resistance that I should not travel to Syrian-controlled areas of Lebanon.

I was told that my activities in support of a free and democratic Lebanon had earned me a spot on the Syrian enemies list. That is the sort of regime we speak of today, and by testifying and speaking the truth today, I am certain that I will again find myself on that list, Mr. Chairman.

Thus, for me, at age 70, this probably means that I will never see my father's home in Lebanon again. God bless America. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Saadi follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ELIAS SAADI, COUNCIL OF LEBANESE AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS

Good Morning, Mr. Chairman:

I come before you today to offer testimony in support of the Syria Accountability Act of 2002.

My name is Eli Saadi. I am an American, a son of Lebanese immigrants; born and bred in Youngstown, Ohio. I am a cardiologist by profession. I have no political affiliation, nor do I hold any citizenship other than that of the U.S.A.

As an American, I feel that every immigrant group makes its greatest contribution to this great and blessed country when it brings what is the very best in that culture to the American table. This is what brings me to this table to speak on behalf of the majority of my fellow Americans of Lebanese descent.

My presence here today is the culmination of 30 years of constant work on behalf of the cause of freedom and democracy in Lebanon. For 30 years I have been engaged in the struggle to free my ancestral homeland from the evil grip of terrorism. As I watched the events that permanently changed this country last September 11, I realized that that struggle which has swallowed up my beloved Lebanon has now reached the shores of my even-more beloved America.

Mr. Chairman, prior to the final Syrian takeover of Lebanon in 1990, I was knighted by the President of Lebanon with the highest award that the Lebanese Government can grant to a civilian: the Order of the Cedar. But I must say that being chosen by a majority of my fellow Americans of Lebanese descent to offer testimony here today is certainly a far greater honor, because it represents an opportunity for me, as an American citizen, to do what is so rarely done—that is, to speak *the truth* about Syria's support for terrorism; to speak *the truth* about Syria's ugly occupation of Lebanon; to speak *the truth* about the impact of these things upon the United States and the cause of freedom and democracy everywhere.

Since the onset of hostilities in the Middle East, the American press has ignored a vital historical fact: That Lebanon gained its independence in 1943 and formalized its democratic roots with a secular constitution and a parliamentary form of representative government with no reference to race, ethnicity or religion. Since the inception of Lebanon, the rights of all religious groupings were protected within a multicultural framework which remained—until the final Syrian assault on Lebanese democracy—a prototype for democratic self-government in the Middle East. Herein lies the uniqueness of the Lebanese gift to America and the reasons why this respected committee should vote in favor of the Syria Accountability Act of 2002.

Mr. Chairman, something has gone wrong, and the U.S. has been looking the other way for far too long. For 25 years the Syrian army has occupied Lebanon and has imposed its will upon the Lebanese people through electoral intimidation, political persecution, stifling of free speech, assassination of opposition leaders including more than one democratically-elected Lebanese president, and last but not least, brute military force. Syria imposed upon Lebanon an un-natural relationship, and has done so under the guise of so-called "brotherly" love. So much love in fact that Lebanon enjoys the infamous distinction of being the only remaining satellite state in the world, and its plight appears open-ended. Syria is the only country currently

occupying another country that is a full member of the United Nations in violation of all international laws.

Mr. Chairman, let me state for the record some undeniable truths:

First, the Lebanese are a western-thinking people, and Lebanon has historically been a bastion of freedom and democracy in a region hostile to such values. Freedom of speech has been the latest casualty. The forced shutdown of the opposition television station MTV two weeks ago was done under the pretext that it was endangering relationship with a brotherly government by debating the question of Syrian withdrawal. Yet every day, the controlled media in Lebanon and Syria is bashing the U.S. How could any segment of our government overlook these events?

Second, since being infected with state-sponsored terrorism over 30 years ago, the Lebanese people have been victims of the very same animalistic groups that struck the United States on Sept 11th one year ago. Syria condones al-Qaida use of Lebanon and provides support, finances, arms, training and headquarters to Hizballah, the PFLP-GC, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad, Syria supports terrorism every bit as much, and possibly more, than Iraq, Iran, or Afghanistan under Taliban rule. Just two weeks ago, in fact, it has been reliably reported that nearly 200 al-Qaida operatives, including several senior commanders, have settled in Lebanon with Syria's permission, taking refuge in a large Palestinian refugee camp. This group arrived from Afghanistan through Iran and Damascus. As of today, eleven terrorist organizations, all listed as such by the U.S. government, are based in Damascus, but operate out of Lebanon.

Third, Lebanon has undergone a transformation—what was once a democracy with constitutionally protected freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom of assembly has been transformed into a police state. There is one reason and one reason alone for this transformation of Lebanon from freedom to terrorism, and that reason is Syria. For a quarter of a century, Syria has controlled Lebanon through a direct military presence and indirect political hegemony. Syria occupies Lebanon militarily and controls the Beirut government politically. Syria's hegemony over Lebanon was achieved through a series of so-called "bilateral treaties." As of this date, the Lebanese Parliament has never debated, let alone questioned, the legality or desirability of any of these treaties and agreements. Damascus has consistently refused to establish official diplomatic relations with Beirut.

Fourth, having completely decimated Lebanon, the cancer of terrorism has spilled over into other freedom loving nations, and hence the United States is now fighting the same war that Lebanon fought for decades before succumbing completely to Syrian domination.

Fifth, Syria has, in refusing to withdraw from Lebanon, and in providing crucial weapons, weapons parts, and oil to Iraq, has shown as much contempt for U.N. resolutions as any other nation on Earth.

Sixth, Syria, a regime with clearly hostile intentions towards all things western, is developing weapons of mass destruction.

Seventh, Syria, through its malicious occupation of Lebanon, its manipulation of Lebanese elections, its ruination of the Lebanese economy, its assassination of voices of opposition in Lebanon, its refusal to disarm Hizbollah and deploy the Lebanese Army to Lebanon's southern border, and its development of weapons of mass destruction, is a terribly destabilizing force in the Middle East.

Eighth, Syrian-sponsored groups have perpetrated acts of terrorism against the United States, not the least of which is the bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Syrian-occupied Lebanon in 1983 which killed 241 American Marines. Further, Syria has killed or made possible the killing of more Americans than any other state including Iraq, starting from the Beirut Embassy and Marine Barracks through the Khobar and Riadh barracks. Just last week a high-ranking State Dept. official stated in reference to Syria, "They owe us plenty of American blood and the U.S. is not in the habit of forgetting debts." Mr. Chairman, while we wage an international war on terrorism which chases terrorist phantoms such as Bin Laden and his henchmen, we must also hold accountable that state which has caused hundreds of American casualties and has the largest terrorist concentration on Earth, with its capital in Damascus. The key to ending Syrian-sponsored terrorism and to saving American lives is to end Syria's occupation of Lebanon and thus end its ability to operate terrorist camps anywhere outside of Syria's borders.

Mr. Chairman, those are the indisputable facts. There are several arguments presented in opposition to the bill. All of these arguments are weak.

The Dept. of State has said that Syria is somehow helping us in our fight against terrorism and that therefore this is the wrong time to enact this bill. It is interesting that neither the State Dept. nor the Administration find any problem with the content of the bill, but only the timing. As one State Department official has

said, quote, “We are in full agreement with the goals underlying this bill,” but “We do not believe this is the right time . . .”

I respectfully propose to you that this “bad timing” argument is a specious argument, and I caution you that it is deceptively attractive. This argument suggests that America can afford to sacrifice basic truths for the sake of short-term tactical gain. I am here today to tell you that the sacrifice of basic truth for short-term tactical gain, especially where Syrian-sponsored terrorism is concerned, *is the very same mistake, made by successive Lebanese governments, which directly led to the loss of Lebanon as a democratic state.* This sort of thinking has cost Lebanon its very existence. If there is one thing that Lebanese-Americans have to offer this country here and now, it is direct first-hand experience with Syrian treachery, deception, and double-talk. I came to Washington today because I will not sit idly by while America falls into the same trap that swallowed up Lebanon, one which will surely cost many more American lives than it saves.

So Syria may be giving us some information which may have saved some American lives; what if Osama Bin Laden gave us some credible information about Shiite factions in Afghanistan that saved American lives? Should we have refrained from confronting Bin Laden and the Taliban, and wait for them to plan another attack on us? Has Syria given us enough information to save as many American lives as they have been responsible for taking, or will certainly take in the future? Absolutely not. Another argument advanced in opposition to this Bill is that it would restrict the lines of communication with Syria. Mr. Chairman, America has been talking to Syria for years and has failed to convince or persuade them in any way. Talk does not work with Syria. The only sort of communication Syria understands, and the only means by which we have ever gotten any sort of reaction from Syria, is when we have sent a clear message which says “Stop, or you’re going to get it.”

An example is Secretary of State Colin Powell’s last April trip to Damascus at the peak of the skirmishes over the Shebaa Farms. The Secretary put an end to this brewing crisis, not by diplomacy, but by pointedly telling the Syrians to stop it or else Israel will. Passage of this bill will certainly not affect our ability to get *that* sort of message through to the Syrians.

Some argue that sanctions such as those contained in this Bill are counter-productive and will have the adverse effect of keeping Syrians in Lebanon. Mr. Chairman, with all respect, this is a ridiculous proposition. Since its inception, Syria has never recognized Lebanon’s existence. Despite Lebanon’s 6000 years of history, Syria has always viewed modern Lebanon as a mere province of Syria. Lebanon asked for an ambassador from Syria, and never got one; no, Lebanon received instead an army of 25,000 ambassadors, each one armed to the teeth. Syria’s actions over the last 25 years prove beyond a doubt that Syria will never, and I repeat, *never*, volunteer to leave Lebanon. Syria will have to be forced out, or they will never go, and Lebanon will remain, under Syrian control, a hotbed of anti-American terrorist activity. Thus, the sanctions imposed on Syria in this bill are a good thing, as the bill not only imposes sanctions, but also gives Syria a roadmap by which those sanctions can be lifted.

It has been stated by one official that “The Syria Accountability Act harms the maneuverability of the U.S. President and could embarrass him in his constitutional functions.” Mr. Chairman, I doubt that President George Bush, who has stated in no uncertain terms that the nations of the world must declare whether they are “with us, or with the terrorists”, would ever be embarrassed by this act. To the contrary, especially in light of his recent address to the UN, I think President Bush should be and will be proud. Finally, there are those who oppose the Syria Accountability Act on the grounds that it will harm American trade with an “important regional player.” But the amount of trade with Syria is, in dollars, inconsequential. Furthermore, the majority of existing trade consists of trade in food and medicine, and this trade is already exempt under the bill. Thus, passage of the bill will not cost American jobs. But even if there was a chance that passage of the bill would cost American jobs, it is certain that not passing the bill will cost American *lives*. This committee should also ask the following question: How much, in dollars, did the attack on 9/11 cost America? How much would another such attack cost? And how much trade is enough to make up for the impact of terrorism? In my view, no amount of trade is worth the price of even one American life.

Mr. Chairman, the Syria Accountability Act of 2002 is a long overdue bill, which states with absolute clarity and brutal honesty the facts as they are today. The Act also provides a clear and concise set of consequences for Syria, and states precisely what Syria must do to avoid those consequences, and thereby outlines a roadmap for change. The Act aims to achieve ends, which are undeniably in the interests of the United States. Time is of the essence, and American lives are at stake.

If the Middle East is ever going to change for the better, we must make our objectives threefold, to disarm terrorist organizations and regimes, to democratize the regimes, and to aid in their development. This bill is a good beginning. Mr. Chairman, with all of the urgency and fervor that I can muster as an American citizen of Lebanese descent, I urge you to lend your support to this bill.

In closing I ask your indulgence to allow me a personal observation—a small tragic personal note. During one visit to Lebanon during the heat of the war, I was informed by the intelligence services of the anti-Syrian Lebanese resistance that I should not travel to Syrian-controlled areas of Lebanon—I was told that my activities in support of a free and democratic Lebanon had earned me a spot on the Syrian “enemies” list. Yes, Syria is the sort of country that keeps lists of enemies as an intimidation tactic. That is sort of regime we are speaking of today. In testifying today and speaking the truth I am certain that I will again find myself on that list. And now, Syria has crushed the Lebanese resistance and controls 100% of the country. Thus for me, at age 70, this means that I will never see my father’s home in Lebanon again. This is indescribably painful for me. But it is a price that I willingly pay to bring freedom back to my ancestral homeland, Lebanon, and security to my beloved country, the United States.

God Bless America. Thank you.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you, Dr. Saadi, for your very forceful presentation.

Now we call on Ambassador Edward Gabriel, who possesses an impressive background in international affairs. Ambassador Gabriel served as our U.S. Ambassador to Morocco from 1997 to 2001. He is currently the President and CEO of Gabriel Global Strategies, where he advises multi-national corporations in international business projects.

He appears today as President of the American Task Force for Lebanon. Mr. Ambassador, please proceed, and please limit your comments to 5 minutes. Thank you.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE EDWARD M. GABRIEL,
PRESIDENT, AMERICAN TASK FORCE FOR LEBANON**

Mr. GABRIEL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will submit my testimony for the record.

Mr. GILMAN. Without objection.

Mr. GABRIEL. Mr. Chairman, it’s a great pleasure to testify before you because, as you know, over the years, I have been able to host you overseas; and get to know you and become your friend. We will miss you greatly in your position.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you for your kind comment.

Mr. GABRIEL. The ATFL is a non-profit organization that unites American leaders of Lebanese heritage who share a strong commitment to strengthening the traditional ties of friendship and the excellent political, economic and cultural relations between the United States of America and the country of Lebanon.

Our members comprise a highly diverse group of very prominent Lebanese Americans—political leaders and others in the fields of education, law, medicine, engineering, business, government, military and the arts. I will make note that some of our members are also Members of your distinguished body—the House of Representatives.

Our primary operating principle is that at all times the mission and the objectives of ATFL shall be in the best interest of the United States of America. Consistent with longstanding U.S. policy, the unifying goal of the members of ATFL is the ultimate establishment of a secure, stable democratic, independent and sovereign

Lebanon with full control over its internationally-recognized territory.

ATFL supports the departure of all non-Lebanese forces from its territory and the disarmament of all remaining militias on Lebanese soil, and the implementation of all U.N. resolutions and international agreements regarding Lebanon.

There are many aspects of the current U.S.-Syrian relationship that are problematic from the perspective of the United States, and they have been voiced very strongly here today. Many and most of the concerns of which I would agree with.

However, we submit that our country's policy goals on Lebanon and the Middle East are best served through diplomacy and negotiation, not in, my opinion, ineffectual and counterproductive confrontation at this point in time.

I speak not only as an American who is responsible for the organization I represent, but from my long history involved in foreign policy. Our very careful reading of the proposed Syria Accountability Act has lead us to conclude that its passage would not be in the best interest of the United States, not to mention Lebanon.

The passage of this act would not increase the U.S. leverage over Syria or Syrian policy in Lebanon; and in my opinion, Mr. Chairman, it would decrease it. Moreover, its passage would seriously impact efforts underway by the United States to encourage Syria to increase its cooperation in the war on terrorism and to move positively toward implementing many of the goals set forth in the proposed act through diplomacy and quiet persuasion.

I would like to quote from a letter sent September 3rd to one of your Members on this Committee from President George Bush and in it, the President opposes this bill.

He says,

“We both have genuine differences and areas of common interest with Syria. Managing our complex relationship with Syria requires the careful and calculated use of all the options we have to advance U.S. interests.

“Imposing the new sanctions regime envisioned by the Syria Accountability Act would limit our options and restrict our ability to deal with the difficult and dangerous regional situation at a particularly critical junction.”

That was signed by George W. Bush.

If David Satterfield were here, he might have told you what he told me last month. That because of the interaction with Syria, and their ability to talk to Syria “American lives have been saved because of their cooperation on Sunni terrorism,” meaning al-Qaeda. That is worth mentioning.

I also make reference to Colin Powell's visit in April when he stopped the attacks that were almost occurring daily by Hezbollah because of his ability to talk to President Assad.

We believe absent a working American-Syrian relationship, Syria would not heed the U.S. concerns over the Syrian presence and policy in Lebanon. I don't believe it will happen. Despite the most optimistic expectations of its supporters, the Syria Accountability Act will not lead to a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon.

To the contrary, I believe an isolated Syria is likely to intensify its relationship with Lebanon. Experience has shown us that unilateral sanctions, such as those envisioned in this act do not work.

Indeed, several of the penalties that were to be leveled in this act toward Syria are already in effect. And I ask you what effect they have had? Additionally, the Syria Accountability Act would directly penalize Lebanon. Even though, Lebanon suffers from the regional constraints of its actions, obviously, and as many people have referred to today.

Mr. GILMAN. The gentleman's time has expired. Please, sum up, if you would.

Mr. GABRIEL. Yes, sir. Let me just jump to my final paragraph, Mr. Chairman.

Finally, let me just tell you, I visited Lebanon July 23rd through the 29th, with the delegation of our members. We met with all the leadership of that country from the Maronite leadership all the way through other political factions.

I want to impress you with one thing because it was mentioned by Mr. Engel in his very thoughtful testimony that; perhaps, he gave the impression—he didn't say this, but perhaps he gave the impression that the Maronite Church supports this act. I guarantee you, and I state for the record, the Maronite Church does not support this act.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I will tell you that no one we met with supported the Syria Accountability Act, although, they all want Syria out of Lebanon. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gabriel follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE EDWARD M. GABRIEL, PRESIDENT,
AMERICAN TASK FORCE FOR LEBANON

The ATFL is a non-profit tax exempt organization that unites American leaders of Lebanese heritage who share a strong commitment to strengthening the traditional ties of friendship and the excellent political, economic and cultural relations between Lebanon and the United States. We are non-sectarian and non-partisan. Our members comprise a highly diverse group of Lebanese American political leaders, and others in the fields of education, law, medicine, engineering, business, government, military and the arts. Our primary operating principle is that at all times, the mission and objectives of the ATFL shall be in the best interest of the United States.

Consistent with longstanding U.S. policy, the unifying goal of the members of the ATFL is the ultimate establishment of a secure, stable, democratic, independent and sovereign Lebanon with full control over all of its internationally recognized territory. The ATFL also supports the departure of all non-Lebanese forces from Lebanese territory, the disarmament of all remaining militia on Lebanese soil, and the implementation of all United Nations resolutions and international agreements regarding Lebanon. We have consistently urged that the United States government be a positive and constructive influence in supporting Lebanon so that these goals can be ultimately realized. Progress on this front has not always been satisfactory or encouraging.

There are many aspects of the current United States-Syrian relationship that are problematic from the perspective of the United States. However, we submit that our country's policy goals on Lebanon and the Middle East are best served through diplomacy and negotiation rather than ineffectual and even counterproductive confrontation.

Our very careful reading of the proposed Syria Accountability Act has led us to conclude that its passage would be neither in the best interest of the United States nor of Lebanon. The passage of this Act would not increase United States leverage over Syria and Syrian policy in Lebanon; it would decrease it. Moreover, its passage would seriously impact efforts underway by the United States to encourage the Government of Syria to increase its cooperation in the war on terrorism, and to move

positively towards implementing many of the goals set forth in the proposed Act through diplomacy and quiet persuasion.

Let us cite an example where a positive American-Syrian engagement has benefited the United States and Lebanon. On April 15, 2002, Secretary of State Colin Powell met with Syrian President Bashar Assad and was able to negotiate an end to the violence across the 'blue line' that could have resulted in a general Middle East war. If the American-Syrian relationship were any more adversarial, this exchange between Secretary Powell and President Assad would likely have been impossible. Moreover, absent a working American-Syrian relationship, Syria would not heed United States concerns over the Syrian presence and policy in Lebanon.

Despite the most optimistic expectations of its supporters, the Syria Accountability Act will not lead to a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. To the contrary, an isolated Syria is likely to intensify its relationship with Lebanon. Experience has shown that unilateral sanctions, such as those envisioned by this Act, do not work. Indeed, several of the penalties to be leveled against Syria by this Act are already in effect; yet, they have in no way altered Syrian policy.

Additionally, the Syria Accountability Act would directly penalize Lebanon, even though Lebanon suffers from regional constraints on its actions. The Act enjoins Lebanon: to enter into serious bilateral negotiations with Israel to realize a full and permanent peace; to evict all terrorist and foreign forces from southern Lebanon, including Hezbollah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards; and, only receive United States humanitarian and educational assistance through appropriate private, non-governmental organizations and appropriate international organizations, until Lebanon asserts sovereignty and control over all of its territory and borders and achieves full political independence.

We understand the need for a strategic, but independent, relationship between Lebanon and Syria. In this context, we would encourage the United States government to engage the parties in discussions on ways to resolve regional issues that would accomplish the intent of the drafters and obviate the need for this legislation.

From July 23 to July 29, a delegation of American Task Force for Lebanon officers met with a range of Lebanese from various religious communities and political orientations. None of our interlocutors supported the Syria Accountability Act, of which they were well aware. Our interlocutors were supportive of a sovereign Lebanon, but they felt that the Syria Accountability Act would not achieve this goal. Indeed, many of our interlocutors thought the bill would have the opposite effect.

We ask that everyone concerned take a critical look at the implications for the United States and Lebanon of the Syria Accountability Act.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you, Ambassador Gabriel. We will now turn to William Reinsch, currently the President of the National Foreign Trade Council. Prior to joining the NFTC, Mr. Reinsch served as Undersecretary for Export Administration at our Department of Commerce.

Mr. Reinsch also spent over 20 years working on Capitol Hill. Let me note for our Members that we will continue with the testimony, so if you care to go and vote early and come right back, we would urge you to do so. Mr. Reinsch?

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE WILLIAM A. REINSCH,
PRESIDENT, NATIONAL FOREIGN TRADE COUNCIL, INC.**

Mr. REINSCH. Thank you very much. Let me say first, Mr. Chairman, it's been an honor and a pleasure to appear before you many times—probably too many times over the past 8 years. I wish you well in your involuntary retirement. The House is not going to be the same without you.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you, Mr. Reinsch, for your kind words.

Mr. REINSCH. Like the others, I ask that my full statement be put in the record.

Mr. GILMAN. Without objection.

Mr. REINSCH. USA Engage, which is a broad-based coalition of over 670 American companies and trade and agricultural organiza-

tions that support sanctions reform, as well as the NFTC, strongly oppose enactment of H.R. 4483.

We believe it will undermine U.S. diplomatic efforts in the region, while depriving American companies of current and potential business opportunities that help bring our two countries closer together.

Like the other witnesses, we share the foreign policy goals the bill seeks to achieve, but we believe that this legislation will bring none of those objectives closer to realization.

On the contrary, we believe it would further isolate Syria from the U.S. and weaken any progressive forces that favor moving Syria away from a state-controlled economy.

There are four principle reasons for our opposition. First, unilateral economic sanctions—and I emphasize “unilateral” economic sanctions have an unblemished record of failure.

Time and again, the U.S. has responded to adverse overseas development by cutting off trade, investment and financial transactions with other nations as a means of changing the behavior of their governments.

Since 1996, the U.S. has imposed 84 new unilateral sanctions. Because of the widespread foreign availability of most items exported by American companies and the globalization of international capital markets, countries targeted by our unilateral sanctions are very rarely impaired in gaining access to the products or financing they seek.

At most, they may pay a small premium or have to be content with less quality. Neither is likely to be a decisive factor in altering their behavior.

Second, while this bill is unlikely to have any impact on Syrian behavior, it would disadvantage and displace U.S. firms that are conducting or want to conduct business there.

There are almost 400 U.S. firms currently doing business with Syria, either directly or as suppliers to other companies. A large percentage of those companies are small and medium-sized enterprises with operations in 184 congressional districts in 42 states and the District of Columbia.

They represent virtually every sector of the U.S. economy, including agriculture, construction and engineering, telecommunications, medical products, aerospace, financial services, natural resource extraction, automotive and information technology.

Although Syria is a country of only 17 million people with a per capita income of approximately \$2500 annually, it does represent sales, income and jobs for thousands of American employees of these nearly 400 companies.

Syria is currently negotiating a free trade agreement with the EU, which will increase European competition against U.S. exports. This disadvantage would only be compounded by the sanctions authorized by H.R. 4483. Currently, more than half of Syria’s exports are to the EU, and over 25 percent of its imports are from there. Sixteen percent of its imports come from Ukraine.

While U.S. exports peaked at \$389 million in 1996, they’ve declined since then to \$224 million thanks, in large part, both to existing sanctions and European competition.

Syria has a free trade agreement with Jordan and an open border with Lebanon, complicating any effort by the U.S. to impose sanctions that increase leverage on Syrian behavior whose impact would be confined to Syria.

Third, in a globalized economy, the flag more often follows trade than the reverse. By introducing our economic systems and standards abroad, American businesses integrate developing countries into the world economic system, paving the way for a similar political integration and development of democratic and transparent institutions internally.

This legislation would eliminate that possibility by radically diminishing the already limited American commercial contact with Syria, thereby foregoing the significant benefits of economic engagement.

The political significance of an open door to U.S. commerce lies in the support it lends to market-oriented elements in Syria that can help the country develop in direction more friendly to the U.S.

A worsening economic situation in Syria strengthens conservative elements and makes it harder for the country to move in the positive directions taken by its regional neighbors, Jordan and Morocco. That, in turn, makes it harder for us to achieve our larger foreign policy goals in the region.

Fourth, the most troubling feature of this bill is the serious limitations it places on the President, and the critical flexibility he needs to deal with our country's most serious foreign policy challenge—peace in the Middle East.

The bill would impose a statutory, mandatory prohibition, not subject to waiver, on U.S. exports to Syria of dual-use items, including such things as medical equipment, gas-processing control systems, and equipment related to safety of commercial passenger airplanes. This is a significant expansion and extension of unilateral sanctions and Congress' role in imposing them.

We believe the President already has more than adequate sanctions authority under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act.

In a letter and statement of position to the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in May, Secretary Powell said that H.R. 4483 would . . .

“have a negative effect on our efforts to bring down the violence, avoid the outbreak of regional war, and help the parties to a path of comprehensive peace.”

He added,

“New sanctions on Syria would place at risk our ability to address a range of issues directly with the Syrian government and to change Syrian behavior.”

Mr. Chairman, I would ask that the text of Secretary Powell's letter, and his accompanying document be placed in the record.

Mr. GILMAN. Without objection. If you would be kind enough to sum up.

Mr. REINSCH. I am on the last section here, Mr. Chairman.

In response to a letter asking about his Administration's Syria policy, as Ambassador Gabriel noted, President Bush has written,

“Imposing the new sanctions regime envisioned by the Syria Accountability Act would limit our options and restrict our ability to deal with a difficult regional situation at a particularly critical juncture.”

We fully endorse Secretary Powell’s desire for carefully calibrated engagement with Syria, and we believe strongly that such engagement must include expanded private sector as well as official relationships.

H.R. 4483 proposes to move in exactly the opposite direction and would do great harm to our goal of peace in the Middle East. For that reason, we strongly oppose the bill. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. [The prepared statement of Mr. Reinsch follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE WILLIAM A. REINSCH, PRESIDENT,
NATIONAL FOREIGN TRADE COUNCIL, INC.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Subcommittee, I am William Reinsch, president of the National Foreign Trade Council, an association of nearly 400 U.S. companies engaged in international trade and investment. I am also appearing as co-chairman of USA*Engage, a broad-based coalition of over 670 American companies and trade and agricultural organizations that support sanctions reform.

We strongly oppose enactment of H.R. 4483, the “Syria Accountability Act of 2002.” It is a measure that will undermine U.S. diplomatic efforts in the region while depriving American companies of current and potential business opportunities that also help bring our two countries closer together. We share the foreign policy goals the bill seeks to achieve: cessation of Syrian support for terrorist groups, Syrian compliance with U. N. Security Council resolutions regarding the integrity of Lebanon, withdrawal of Syrian forces from that country, and cessation of Syrian transshipments of Iraqi oil outside of the U.N. program and of Syrian development of weapons of mass destruction. This legislation would bring none of these objectives nearer to realization. On the contrary, it would further isolate Syria from the U.S. and weaken progressive forces that favor moving Syria away from a state-controlled economy.

There are four principal reasons for our opposition to H.R. 4483: (1) it is a unilateral economic sanction that cannot and will not achieve its stated objectives; (2) it would impose real costs on U.S. workers and firms and foreclose future commercial opportunities without any offsetting foreign policy benefits; (3) it is counterproductive to minimize the presence of U.S. companies in Syria and the incentive they can provide Syria to move toward market reforms; and (4) it would seriously limit presidential flexibility in making policy in a very complex and dangerous situation at a critical juncture in the Middle East.

1. Unilateral economic sanctions have an unblemished record of failure. Time and again the U.S. has responded to adverse overseas developments by cutting off trade, investment and financial transactions with other nations as a means of changing the behavior of their governments. Since 1996 the U.S. imposed 84 new unilateral sanctions. Because of the widespread foreign availability of nearly all items exported by American companies and the globalization of international capital markets, countries targeted by our unilateral sanctions are very rarely impaired in gaining access to the products or financing they seek. At most, they may pay a small premium or have to be content with less quality. Neither is likely to be a decisive factor in altering their behavior.

Multilateral sanctions have a somewhat better record if they involve the cooperation of the major trading partners of the target country. South Africa was subject to U.N., OECD and European Union, as well as U.S., sanctions, and together they contributed to the end of apartheid. But there is no such multilateral sanctions regime in place against Syria, nor is there likely to be. The foreign policy objectives of H.R. 4483 are vastly disproportionate to the very minimal increase in pressure that these sanctions are likely to exert on Syria. It is that disproportion that is their fatal flaw.

2. While H.R. 4483 is unlikely to have any impact on Syrian behavior, it would uniquely disadvantage and displace U.S. firms that are conducting, or want to conduct, business there. Syria already appears on our list of state sponsors of terrorism, so exports of sensitive products are already controlled. Even so,

there are almost 400 U.S. firms currently doing business with Syria, either directly or as suppliers to other companies. A large percentage of these companies are small and medium-sized enterprises with operations in 184 congressional districts in 42 states and the District of Columbia. They represent virtually every sector of the U.S. economy, including agriculture, construction and engineering, telecommunications, medical products, aerospace, financial services, natural resource extraction, automotive and information technology. Although Syria is a country of only 17 million people with a per capita income of \$2500, it does represent sales, incomes and jobs for thousands of Americans employees of these nearly 400 companies.

Syria is currently negotiating a free trade agreement with the EU, which will increase European competition against U.S. exports. This disadvantage would only be compounded by the sanctions authorized by H.R. 4483. Currently more than half (55%) of Syria's exports are to the European Union and over 25% of their imports are from the EU. 16% of their imports come from Ukraine. While U.S. exports peaked at \$389 million in 1996, they have declined since then to \$224 million thanks in large part to existing sanctions and European competition. In addition, Syria has a free trade agreement with Jordan and an open border with Lebanon, complicating any effort by the U.S. to impose sanctions that increase leverage on Syrian behavior or whose impact is confined to Syria.

3. In a globalized economy, the flag more often follows trade than the reverse. By introducing our economic systems and standards abroad, American businesses integrate developing countries into the world economic system, paving the way for a similar political integration and the development of democratic and transparent institutions internally. This legislation would eliminate that possibility by radically diminishing the already limited American commercial contact with Syria, thereby foregoing the significant benefits of economic engagement. The political significance of an open door to U.S. commerce lies in the support it lends to market-oriented elements in Syria that can help the country develop in directions more friendly to the U.S. Commercial engagement can be a counterweight to the Baath party old guard who seek to prevent President Bashar al-Assad from changing his late father's policies. A worsening economic situation in Syria strengthens conservative elements and makes it harder for the country to move in the positive directions taken by its regional neighbors, Jordan and Morocco. That, in turn, makes it harder for us to achieve our larger foreign policy goals in the region.
4. The most troubling feature of H.R. 4483 is the serious limitation it places on the President and the critical flexibility he needs to deal with our country's most serious foreign policy challenge—peace in the Middle East. The bill would impose a statutory, mandatory prohibition, not subject to presidential waiver, on U.S. exports to Syria of dual-use items, including such things as medical equipment, gas-processing control systems, and equipment related to the safety of commercial passenger airplanes. This is a significant expansion and extension of unilateral sanctions and Congress's role in imposing them. In addition, the President already has more than adequate sanctions authority under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA).

In a letter and statement of position to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in May, Secretary Powell said that H.R. 4483 would "have a negative effect on our efforts to bring down the violence, avoid the outbreak of regional war, and help the parties to a path to comprehensive peace." He added, "New sanctions on Syria would place at risk our ability to address a range of issues directly with the Syrian government and to change Syrian behavior." In response to a letter asking about his administration's Syria policy, President Bush has written, "Imposing the new sanctions regime envisioned by the Syria Accountability Act would limit our options and restrict our ability to deal with a difficult regional situation at a particularly critical juncture."

We fully endorse Secretary Powell's desire for "carefully calibrated engagement" with Syria, and we believe strongly that such engagement must include expanded private sector as well as official relationships. H.R. 4483 proposes to move in exactly the opposite direction and would do great harm to our goal of peace in the Middle East. For that reason we strongly oppose the bill.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you, Mr. Reinsch, for your testimony.

Mr. Sherman cannot return, and asked for 2 minutes at this time. Mr. Sherman?

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would point out that, yes, we may have sanctions against 84 countries, if you want to count that high. But if you count as a sanction the fact that the United States may deny foreign aid to a country, then Britain and France are also getting sanctioned by the United States because we don't give them foreign aid either.

There are close parallels between Syria and Iraq, both oppress their own people to an incredible degree, and in violation of U.N. Standards. The City of Hama calls out for a remembrance where 30 or 40,000 people were killed. Both countries developed chemical weapons. Both occupy a neighboring state, or did so, in violation of U.N. resolutions.

Syria's occupation of Lebanon violates Resolution 520, just as when Iraq entered Kuwait, I don't believe there was a resolution in advance, but its continued occupation was in violation of U.N. resolutions. Iraq cheats on the Oil-for-Food Program, Syria helps.

So it's hard to find a reason why we're about to go to war with one country, and we should do business as usual with the other. The one great difference is that Syria is developing nuclear weapons as well as other weapons of mass destruction.

I would hope that the Administration would focus on that difference, and would demand the most intrusive kind of inspections because if we got the most intrusive kinds of inspections, and demanded, effectively, that there not be interfered with, then, in fact, Iraq and Syria could become indistinguishable, and then should be treated identically. Until, of course, we get those inspections there is that one great difference.

I yield back.

Mr. ISSA [presiding]. Mr. Hoeffel?

Mr. CROWLEY. I'm Mr. Crowley. Joe is the first name.

Mr. ISSA. I'm sorry.

Mr. CROWLEY. That's okay. We look alike. He's from Pennsylvania. I'm from New York. That's the only difference.

Mr. SHERMAN. And they are both such incredibly good-looking individuals, I can understand why?

Mr. ISSA. Joe, it wouldn't be so bad. We were in New York together before, but I am just looking at this thing and reading a script. I got caught. That's the problem with being new to the Chair. Please.

Mr. CROWLEY. I'll just take a brief minute, Mr. Chairman.

That is just to state that I have a strongly worded statement in Mr. Engel's work, and I applaud the work that he and Mr. Arney have done on the Syria Accountability Act, H.R. 4483. I will submit this statement for the record.

I appreciated the statements made by the three witnesses; particularly, Mr. Saadi. You talked about the fact that sanctions have worked in other parts of the world, such as South Africa.

Clearly, the imposition of sanctions is only one tool in the foreign policy toolbox that the United States can use to influence the behavior of other states. But I think what has taken place in Syria for the last 25 years has been deplorable. Syria's support of international and state-sponsored terrorism needs to end.

What the Syrian regime has done in Lebanon is unconscionable. Its continued threats to the State of Israel must stop. Perhaps the

threat of sanctions on Syria's already anemic economy will encourage Syria to end its illegal occupation of Lebanon, cease its support for terrorism, halt its development of weapons of mass destruction, and make a sincere effort to negotiate a peace agreement with Israel. U.S. policy to date has failed to encourage Syria to abandon these activities, so perhaps it is time to give sanctions a chance.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ISSA. In the interest of not having the testimony missed by the Members who presently aren't here. The Chair will yield himself 5 minutes, and only pick on those who have already given their statements.

If we don't have a number of Members back by that time, we will go on. I hope that's in your best interest, Mr. Levitt?

Mr. LEVITT. That's fine, but don't hesitate to ask me questions, too. Bring them on.

Mr. ISSA. Fair enough. Dr. Saadi, the question I would ask you—purely, perhaps, because you are of Lebanese descent and have a lot of time there is this: This bill deals with a broad spectrum of allegations about Syria, and asks for many changes in Syria and elevates existing sanctions to a higher level if they don't comply with any and all of them.

From your standpoint, if this act were simply to say that Syria must comply with the Taif Accords and leave Lebanon by a date certain, or all these sanctions would go into place and remain in place, would that meet your personal belief of what is affecting Lebanon?

Dr. SAADI. Mr. Chairman, no, because your statement addresses, essentially, only what is good for Lebanon. As an American, the overriding interest I have is what is good for the United States of America. So the objections in the statement stands. I am approaching this as an American of Lebanese descent; primarily, first and foremost.

Mr. ISSA. Then, if I can reverse the question, if Syria made all of the changes called for, but since, technically, they are guest of the Lebanese government, for better or worse, they stand with an invitation from Lebanon by the three leaders that many of us on this panel have met with. If they were to denounce all violence, end all cooperation with all terrorist groups, including, and especially, Hezbollah, would that meet your requirements?

Dr. SAADI. It would go a long way, but I have to correct an impression that technically they are guest of the Lebanese State.

Mr. ISSA. Doctor, I use the word "technically" because, according to all the information I have, although, perhaps, with a wink and a nod, technically, could be used; they do have a historic invitation—having been to Lebanon myself many times, it is almost irrefutable that at the time they came in, to a great extent, at the same time that Israel came in, there was instability and both were credited—at least, initially, with some benefit to Lebanon during its civil war.

Am I misunderstanding something in the history that you can say is in the record somewhere?

Dr. SAADI. It is not in the record that the Lebanese State ever invited Syria in. In the case of Lebanon, and Syria's occupation of

Lebanon, Syria has acted both as the arsonist and the fireman. That's summarizes the 25 years.

They got entry into Lebanon by and through the Palestinian Liberation Army, and when it no longer suited their purposes, they chased them out. They also had some cover through the Arab League's Arab Deterrent Force. Well, everyone is gone. Why is Syria there? If someone comes in to help you fix something in your house, does he stay in your house forever.

Mr. ISSA. Doctor, I appreciate that. So in summarizing your testimony, it would be fair to say that, even if an invited guest, they have clearly overstayed their welcome.

Dr. SAADI. Clearly. But I want to also state that they have been asked to leave officially.

Mr. ISSA. By whom?

Dr. SAADI. President Amin Gamayel. It's of record. He has asked them to leave. The interim Prime Minister Michele Aoun asked them to leave. They have been asked to, essentially—invited to leave through the Taif Agreement, which should have taken place in 1992—10 years ago.

Mr. ISSA. I appreciate that. Now if I can switch now to the Ambassador with essentially the same line of questioning because it is important for us to understand, if we cannot achieve all the goals of this act, what goals, in fact, would benefit the United States and/or Lebanon the most.

Please, Mr. Ambassador.

Mr. GABRIEL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think Elias and I and many people who care about the relationship between Lebanon and America share a common goal, and that is to make sure that Lebanon remains sovereign and independent.

Mr. ISSA. Not to interrupt you, but are you saying that they are sovereign and independent today, or would we use the term "become" sovereign and independent?

Mr. GABRIEL. I believe today, on the record, Lebanon is a sovereign, independent, recognized country of the U.N. However, I do not believe Lebanon has the ability to control its own affairs, and therefore, we need to make sure that Syria has less influence and presence there so that Lebanon can fulfill and act like a sovereign state that it was obviously given under the mandate of its constitution.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Ambassador, I'll take that as a typical Lebanese statement that they are and they are not. For the record, I am also of Lebanese descent.

I want to be fair to all those not here, and not abuse the opportunity to be in the chair, but I will make one short statement, and allow Mr. Levitt to go on with his prepared statement.

I think all the panel, and perhaps, the many people assembled here, need to understand that; there has been, and will continue to be a lot controversy as to what the right solution is to the problem.

I would say to a person there is not a Member of this Committee who believes that Lebanon is presently able to exercises its own affairs independently, or that presently, the presence and activity of Hezbollah in the south of Lebanon as the last militia of the civil

war, is anything but adverse to Lebanon's ability to claim independence and be an active part of the world.

I am being advised that we have the opportunity for continued dialogue. Mr. Levitt, we will waive your statements for a moment, and come back to them when more of my colleagues are here. But you have an insight into this, too, and I don't want to limit it because of whose given their testimony.

Mr. LEVITT. Well, I don't want to give my testimony by default.

Mr. ISSA. You will still have your 5 minutes when others return.

**STATEMENT OF MATTHEW A. LEVITT, SENIOR FELLOW,
WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY**

Mr. LEVITT. I think the bottom line is that their business interests—there are all kinds of interest. Syria is waiting to hear from us. Syria is waiting to hear whether numerous presidential and other statements are worth weight in paper. Do we mean it when we say that there will be consequences, and we've said it numerous times. Do we mean it?

When the President of Syria promised Secretary of State Powell that he will cease pumping illicit Iraqi oil, and then he doesn't do it, will there be consequences? The only way to engage Syria today, and this is the right time to do it. We are at the critical juncture to do it, is to show Syria that, in fact, there are consequences. That is a war on terrorism—on terrorism means it's not just a war on al-Qaeda.

I don't think the issue should be whether or not we can establish beyond a shadow of a doubt that Syria is allowing al-Qaeda operatives to travel through Syria and set up camp in Lebanon. According to the Administration officials I've spoken to, that is the case. But whether or not that is true, that's not the only terrorism that's out there.

We don't pick and chose which terrorist groups are okay and which are not okay. Syria is more proactive in sponsoring terrorism today than it was under Hafez al-Assad, Bashar has dropped the whole pretense—any pretense of his father's conscience.

Syria today directly arms Hezbollah as opposed to only allowing the shipment of arms from Iran, and it is a very, very serious problem. According to the people in the Administration that I speak to today, Hezbollah, which is Syria and Iran's primary proxy, today, continues to surveil U.S. interests and continues to plot attacks on U.S. interests.

Mr. ISSA. Well, let me follow up on that because I think that's a very important point. I have more than a few times cautioned Lebanon and Syria about the danger of Hezbollah in allowing it to continue, not necessarily under the control of any one body; but with the money of one or more bodies and with very loose control.

To a great extent, as a former soldier, I fear armies; but I fear armies without generals even more. I think that Hezbollah is a good example of one where the money flows in, some control is asserted, but quite frankly, this is a terrorist organization that has its own ideas, and periodically, acts very independently, which is even more dangerous than if they were directed by a particular nation or state.

If Syria were to leave today, what would make Hezbollah go away? What mechanism in this act would the U.S. employ to get al-Qaeda out of the Palestinian refugee camps? What would we do to clear the mine fields; to root out Hezbollah and to make the south of Lebanon a similar place to; perhaps, other areas of the world where an army and a police force enforces a border?

What could we do and how would we get to a free Lebanon that makes its borders safe with its neighbors?

Mr. LEVITT. Well, first of all, I disagree. I think there is stuff in this act that would start us along that road. There is no one thing. I think it would go a whole heck of a long way if we could close down the training camps, both in Syria and in Lebanon. We have completely been overlooking the fact that there are training camps in Syria that are training terrorists today.

It would go a long way if we could convince Syria to kick out the leadership of Palestinian and other terrorist organizations, which, contrary to Syrian rhetoric which states that they are just there for political purposes are directly funding terrorist attacks and calling for terrorist attacks and are ordering them from Damascus.

I think it would go a long way if we could establish that there are consequences of facilitating the Bekaa Valley being a terrorist haven; enabling Ein-Hilweh and other Palestinian refugee camps to become a den of terrorism.

Mr. ISSA. Doctor, you had a follow-up statement on that?

Dr. SAADI. Yes, Mr. Chairman. I can't let an impression stand that was made this morning about the Maronite Church. The head of the Maronite Church, Cardinal Nasrallah Sfeir, does not enter into the affairs of other countries.

The voice of the Maronite Church was heard in Los Angeles in June of this year. It was from five continents. There was an assembly which included eight bishops from Lebanon—Maronite bishops that unanimously approved support for this bill. When the bishops went back to Lebanon, they were under enormous pressure and threats—and Mr. Chairman, we are at a momentous time—and I'll close—in our history.

That is, you identified yourself as a Lebanese-American. You and I, as Lebanese-Americans, we have to chose between support for our ancestral heritage and stand with our ancestors or side with those forces who have historically oppressed them. The choice is yours and mine.

Mr. ISSA. Thank you, Doctor. Just for the record, I am an American of Lebanese ancestry whose grandfather left because, under the Ottoman Empire, Lebanon was not a place in which Christians were free to make equal compensation and be successful financially. Like most Americans of Lebanese ancestry, we tend to be Christians and we tend to be a people who understand the importance of a nation in which Christians have equal opportunity.

So I, for one, am very dedicated toward finding a way to establish a free, independent, and militia-free Lebanon. It is one of the reasons that I have concerns about this bill is that it does seem to talk about what is wrong with Syria, most of which is true, but knowing that since 1983, Syria has had a series of fairly significant sanctions and that they haven't worked, I ask why would this make a safe and free Lebanon?

It is the concern I have, and I will close by asking the Ambassador who has been shaking his head feverishly to comment on the portion of the question, which is, if the goal of this act is to free Lebanon.

What in this act, beyond saying Syria should leave, is actually going to take care of the militias, including Hezbollah and the activities that I denounced in the Palestinian camps, which Lebanon has a very hard time controlling?

Even Israel, when they occupied, had a very hard time controlling them. Mr. Ambassador?

Dr. SAADI. We share the same heritage.

Mr. GABRIEL. Mr. Chairman, I just don't believe that terrorists and terrorism is going to go away as a result of this act. I don't see the cause and effect of sanctions doing that.

What I do see from a sanctions regime is that we are going to lose leverage on the diplomatic front, and we're going to be left with punitive and military measures. That's where I think the logic goes with this bill. I would much prefer to see the United States Government really have a sense of direction and a very strong, strategic position on Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the consequences of what would happen if diplomatic solutions wouldn't work in the future.

I think this is something that the President has to have the purview on and to follow. So I would suggest that this is not the way to go, but to force the Administration into a much stronger position on a Syrian-Lebanon policy is the way to go, and I would like to share, at some point, with Members of this Committee, ideas that we could jointly conceive together.

Mr. GILMAN [presiding]. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. Matthew Levitt is a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. He specializes in terrorism and U.S. policy.

Prior to joining the Institute, Mr. Levitt served as an FBI analyst, providing tactical and strategic analysis in support of counterterrorism operations.

Mr. Levitt, please proceed. Please, limit your remarks to 5 minutes. You may put your full statement in the record.

Mr. LEVITT. Absolutely. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would ask that my written statement be included in the record.

Mr. GILMAN. Without objection.

Mr. LEVITT. I would just summarize some key points.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you.

Mr. LEVITT. The bottom line is that Syria is actively undermining the three most pressing U.S. national security interests in the Middle East. Those are fighting the war on terrorism, liberating Iraq and the escalating Israeli-Palestinian conflict and resuming peaceful negotiations.

As we've heard this morning, despite intelligence sharing on things like the interrogation of Mohammed Zammar, which, by the way, we don't know just how—the full extent of that cooperation. U.S. authorities have not been given direct access to him. But despite that, as we've heard this morning, there is an agreement on five basic points.

Syria is pumping approximately 150,000 barrels in illicit Iraqi oil. Syria procures arms and military spare parts for Iraq. Syria continues to occupy Lebanon. Syria has advanced chemical and biological weapons programs, and it seeking the technology for delivery system. Most critically, Syrian support for terrorist groups of global reach has increased since Barshar Assad came to power.

That sponsorship includes providing safe haven to the leaders of at least seven terrorist organizations on the State Department's foreign terrorist organization list; harboring and training terrorist, both in Syria itself and in Lebanon; arming terrorist groups, both via the trans-shipment of Iranian arms, and now directly arming Hezbollah itself, and serving as Iran's outlet to terrorist groups in Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza.

Finally, allowing Lebanon to become itself a hornet's nest of international terrorist groups, including Palestinian groups, Hezbollah, but also Armenian groups, al-Qaeda and many others. We don't need to go back to 1979, as some others have today, to discuss Syrian support of terrorism. Let's just look at what's going on right now. Syria is directly arming Hezbollah, including a new 220 millimeter rocket.

At Syria's behest, Hezbollah has increased its terrorist activity in Israel, including activity in Israel proper. Israeli authorities have uncovered more than 20 Hamas activists who were recruited in various Arab countries, sent to Syria for terrorist training and preparation of explosives, intelligence activities, hostage taking, and suicide operations training in Syria itself.

In May, Damascus reportedly offered Hamas direct Syrian financial aid if it renewed suicide bombings. Palestinian Islamic Jihad ordered the June 5, 2002 suicide bus bombing in Megiddo in northern Israel from Damascus. Shallah himself transfers funds, \$127,000 in one instance, from Damascus to the personal bank account of individual Islamic Jihad terrorists in the West Bank.

Members of the Al-Aqsa Brigade, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other Palestinian groups have been undergoing terrorist training at a PFLP-GC camp south of Damascus. Traveling through Jordan, the Palestinian trainees are met at the Jordanian-Syrian border by Syrian officials who check their names against a pre-approved list, and escort them to the camps run by PFLP-GC.

A former PFLP-GC member told the Jordanian court in February that one of the 13 suspects on trial for plotting to bomb the U.S. Embassy in Amman asked him to arrange terrorist training for the group in Syria. Munir al-Magdah is an international terrorist wanted by both Lebanese and Jordanian authorities whose residence is in a Palestinian camp in Lebanon.

According to mainstream Fatah officials, al-Magdah "has very good ties with Syria and Iran. These countries pay him millions of dollars."

We are becoming background noise. The President said,

"From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime."

Implicitly, he offered state-sponsors an amnesty if they would stop sponsoring terrorism—nothing since then.

Later that month, the President said,

“We fight the terrorists and we fight all of those who those who give them aid. America has a message for the nations of the world. If you harbor a terrorist, you are terrorist. If you feed a terrorist or fund a terrorist, you are a terrorist, and you will be held accountable by the United States and our friends.”

We are not doing that. It’s all talk and they hear it.

In his speech to the United Nations, the President said,

“In this world there are good causes and bad causes, and we may disagree about where this line is drawn. Yet there is not such thing as a good terrorist, no national aspiration, no remembered wrong can ever justify the deliberate murder of the innocent. Any government that reject this principle trying to pick and chose it terrorists will know the consequences.”

Syria picks and chooses. It knows no consequences.

Finally, on June 24th, the President said that Syria had to “choose the right side on the war on terrorists like closing terrorist training camps and expelling terrorist organizations.” Are these empty words? Are they “kalam fadi”—empty words? Are we just background noise?

There are four falsehoods, I believe, that people who are against this bill will mention. One is that the bill would curtail the Administration’s margin of maneuverability. In fact, the act is an actual manifestation of the President’s own warning that those who support terror will be held accountable. Bashar Assad is waiting to see if we are serious or if this is just more background noise.

This issue of the margin of maneuverability sends Assad and others the clear message that sponsoring certain terrorist groups maybe tolerated in return for some level of cooperation against other groups.

Syria believes, for example, that it can leverage cooperation related to the interrogation of Mohammed Zammar, an al-Qaeda terrorist linked to the September 11th hijackings, for American indifference to related to its continued terrorist activities. This undermines the war on terrorism.

In fact, the Syria Accountability Act builds in, both a national security interest waiver, and indicating its respect for the Administration’s need for flexibility only requires the government to select two of the five most sensitive proposed sanctions.

People suggest that this bill would push Syria into the arms of Iraq. Syria is already there. Just as in the war on terrorism, Syria needs to chose the right side when it comes to Iraq.

There is a report coming out today from another think tank indicating that up to half to the \$2 billion in illicit funds that are supporting and propping up the Iraqi regime come from the illicit oil trade with Syria.

There are those who say the bill would undermine Syrian reform, and it’s true that when Bashar Assad first came to power there was great hope; but let’s take a measure. Early measures taken to liberalize the banking industry and crack down on corruption have fizzled. While some civilians have been jailed on corruption

charges, the most seriously corrupt elements of Syrian society—the Syrian military has been left untouched.

The recent closure of the Lebanese MTV television station is just the most recent manifestation of the Syrian crackdown on Lebanese society, and there has been no reform regarding the support for terrorism. When a suicide bomber murdered 15 people at a pool hall outside of Tel Aviv, Syrian state-controlled radio lauded “the wonderful and special suicide attacks,” and which they described as a “practical declaration of the whole world of a way to liberate Arab Palestinian land.”

In fact, I think nothing undermines the need to establish an independent Palestinian state more than these terrorist attacks.

Just 2 days before the September 11th attacks, Syria state-appointed Grand Mufti described “heroic suicide operations as a natural and legitimate reaction that must be blessed”—September 9, 2001. Damascus openly flaunts its support for terrorism and is hardly engaged in either domestic or foreign policy reform.

Mr. GILMAN. The gentleman’s time is expiring. Would you please sum up?

Mr. LEVITT. Inducing Syria to abandon its support for terrorism through financial, diplomatic or even military pressure will not be easy, even if such measures are coupled with space-saving gestures; nevertheless, it is essential that the United States follow through on its declared policy of a zero tolerance for state sponsorship of terrorism.

U.S. officials have stated unequivocally that such sponsorship must end, and that the organizations supported by Syria are terrorist groups of global reach. History shows that an even greater risk to U.S. interests will emerge if Washington fails to live up to its word. Such a failure will ensure that future pleas to end terror are heard, if at all, as nothing more than diplomatic background noise. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Levitt follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MATTHEW A. LEVITT, SENIOR FELLOW, WASHINGTON
INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY

The following written statement borrows heavily from the author’s forthcoming monograph, “No Good Terrorists’: Middle Eastern Terrorist Groups and State Sponsors in the War on Terror” (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, forthcoming October 2002)

As the Bush administration surveys its options for year two of the war on terrorism, scant attention is focused on Syria—despite the fact that Dr. Bashar al-Assad’s regime has been among the world’s most active supporters of terrorism, even after September 11. In fact, Syrian support for terrorism under Bashar al-Assad has become far more brazen and direct than it was under the rule of his father, Hafez al-Assad. Over the past year, the President and other senior officials have warned Damascus to terminate its proactive sponsorship of international terrorist groups of global reach, extended face-saving opportunities for Syria to do so, and warned that Syria that it must close down terrorist training camps, expel terrorist organizations, and “choose the right side in the war on terror.” Failure to hold Syria accountable for its support of international terrorism after repeatedly articulating this message will further dilute America’s already diminished credibility in the eyes of men like Bashar al-Assad, Yasir Arafat, and Saddam Hussein. Bashar is waiting to see if the United States will actually act on all its talk, or if in fact it’s all just *kalam fadi*, empty words.

BACKGROUND

Syria is a charter member of the State Department's state sponsors of terrorism list, subject to relevant bilateral economic sanctions, but is the only Middle Eastern state sponsor subject to congressionally imposed state-sponsorship sanctions only.¹ However, efforts to convince or compel Syria to renounce terrorism, in both word and deed, have historically been of lower priority than encouraging Syrian moderation in Arab-Israeli diplomacy. Indeed, successive U.S. administrations have seemed to act on the supposition that the path to ending Syrian support for terrorism is via a Syria-Israel peace treaty. Since the prospects for Syrian-Israeli peace receded after the failed Clinton-Assad summit of March 2000, neither goal—ending Syrian terrorism or pursuing Syrian-Israeli peace—has been a high priority for the United States.

After the al Qaeda attacks in September 2001, the Bush administration focused once again on the role of state sponsors, but with a twist. The wording of President Bush's September 20, 2001, declaration—"From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime"—implicitly offered state sponsors a virtual amnesty for previous actions, should they jettison the terrorist option and join fully in the campaign to stamp out terror.² This message was reinforced vis-a-vis the Syrian case when the United States did not oppose Syria's election to the world's most elite security club—the United Nations Security Council—one week later.

POSITIVE MEASURES?

Since September 11, Syria has undertaken limited and measured but positive steps in the war on terrorism. Syrian authorities reportedly arrested four Syrian nationals and an unspecified number of foreigners allegedly affiliated with al Qaeda in the village of Deir a-Zor (as reported in a November 23, 2001, communiqué of the Syrian Human Rights Organization).³ The Syrians also reportedly allowed an FBI agent to visit Aleppo and question individuals who knew September 11 mastermind Muhammad Atta in the mid-1990s (although reported in numerous press stories, knowledge of the visit was denied by Syrian officials who also denied any official cooperation between Syria and the FBI).⁴ Syria has shared intelligence with U.S. agencies on people and organizations linked to al Qaeda, especially Syrian-born German citizen and senior al Qaeda commander Mohammad Heidar Zammar.⁵ U.S. officials, however, have not been granted direct access to Zammar, and have no way of knowing if the Syrians are passing along everything Zammar tells them or just information that suits their interests. For example, the Syrians are unlikely to share information pertaining to Syrian nationals or other terrorist groups enjoying Syrian support. In fact, German law enforcement authorities investigating the Hamburg cell maintain they have yet to receive any information from the interrogations of Zammar.⁶

The *New York Times* cited unnamed U.S. officials as stating that a senior CIA official held secret discussions with a Syrian counterpart relating to al Qaeda.⁷ While unconfirmed, it is suspected that some of the intelligence cooperation centered

¹Iran, Iraq, Libya and Sudan are all subject to additional sanctions such as the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA), the Helms-Burton Act, the Cuban Democracy Act, the Trade Sanctions and Export Enhancement Act, the Trading with the Enemy Act, the Arms Export Control Act, the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, and more. For a complete listing of the U.S. Treasury Department's sanctions programs and country summaries, see <http://www.treas.gov/of-fices/enforcement/ofac/sanctions/index.html>

²Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People, which can be found at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>

³At <http://www.menewslines.com/stories/2001/november/11-23-4.html>

⁴NA, "A Tap from Uncle Sam on Bashar's Shoulder", *Ha'aretz Daily*, January 2, 2002.

⁵Steven Erlanger, "Germans Say Figure Linked to Sept. 11 is in Syria Jail," *The New York Times*, June 19, 2002; Peter Finn, "Syria Interrogating al Qaeda Recruiter," *The Washington Post*, June 19, 2002. Zammar is not the only senior al Qaeda operative of Syrian origin. Others include Mamoun Dakazanli (whose import-export businesses were fronts for terrorist financing), Mohammed Galeb Kalaje Zouaydi (an al Qaeda financier linked to al Qaeda cells in Madrid, Hamburg and Milan), Kamal Hadid Chaar, Ghasoub al Abrash Ghayloun, Abdalrahman Alarnaot Abu Aljer, Mohamen Khair al Saqq, Mostafa Abdel Kader Miriam, and Abdul Matin Tatari (whose companies are suspected of serving as a front for a network that supplied false documents, laundered money, and smuggled terrorists from country to country).

⁶Douglas Frantz, "Sharing Informaiton: Learning to Spy with Allies," *The Washington Post*, September 8, 2002

⁷Neil MacFarquhar, "A Nation Challenged: Damascus; Syria Repackages Its Repression of Muslim Militants as Antiterror Lesson," *The New York Times*, January 14, 2002, P. A8 arabicnews.com, Oct. 29, 2001, at <http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/Day/011029/2001102906.html>

on Mamoun Darkazanli, the fugitive Syrian businessman who appears to have served as a key financial conduit between Atta's Hamburg cell and al Qaeda.⁸ In the weeks leading up to Syria's election to the Security Council, reports suggested a slowdown in the flow of arms from Tehran to Damascus, transshipped under Syrian military escort to Hizballah in Lebanon.⁹ Sources indicate this apparent slowdown was short lived. Most critically, Syria has provided actionable intelligence from interrogations of al Qaeda operatives held in Syria—most likely Zammar—that led to the disruption of at least one terrorist attack against U.S. military forces in the Gulf.¹⁰

BUSINESS AS USUAL

The significance of these measures notwithstanding, the most important theme of Syria's policy on terrorism since September 11 has been "business as usual." In fact, no country has rejected the Bush administration's outreach approach as dismissively as has Syria. For example, in his June 24, 2002, speech demanding Palestinian reform President Bush also called on Syria to "choose the right side in the war on terror by closing terrorist camps and expelling terrorist organizations."¹¹ The *al-Liwaa* newspaper ran an interview with Bashar al-Assad a week later, in which the Syrian President asserted that Palestinian suicide bombings were simply acts of "despair" caused by "Israel's barbaric practices against an unarmed people," and asserted that "Syria supports the Lebanese national resistance, including Hizballah."¹²

HARBORING TERRORISTS, PROMOTING TERROR

According to the State Department, seven of the twenty-eight terrorist groups cited in *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000* receive some level of sponsorship and support from Syria, and a number of "Specially Designated Terrorists," such as senior Hamas official Mousa Abu Marzook and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) leader Ramadan Abdullah Shallah, coordinate terrorist activities and reside in Damascus (together with other leaders of terrorist organizations not yet listed as Specially Designated Terrorists).¹³ From these headquarters, the groups and leaders incite, recruit, train, coordinate, and direct terrorism. Indeed, since September 11, no fewer than five Damascus-based organizations—PIJ, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and Hizballah—have undertaken operations, from suicide bombings to assassinations, resulting in the deaths of dozens of civilians and an Israeli cabinet minister.

Syrian officials actively support these groups' activities—despite protestations that Palestinian groups maintain solely "political offices" in Damascus—as evidenced in the May 21, 2001, meeting between DFLP head Nayef Hawatmeh and Syrian Defense Minister Gen. Mustafa Tlas. According to a DFLP official, "the talks covered ways of supporting the Palestinian uprising and resistance in occupied Palestine against the Zionist aggressions."¹⁴ In another example, former Hamas military commander Salah Shehadea himself acknowledged the central role played by these "political" leaders in acts of terrorism. Shehadea asserted that "the political apparatus is sovereign over the military apparatus, and a decision of the political [echelon] takes precedence over the decision of the military [echelon], without intervening in military operations."¹⁵

While it is far from certain the talks would have amounted to anything, the fact is that the "political," Damascus-based leaders of Palestinian rejectionist groups like Hamas and PIJ torpedoed talks between the Palestinian Authority and various Palestinian factions in August on the terms of a proposed ceasefire. The "outside" leadership in Damascus pressured the groups' "inside" leaders not to accede to any deal that proscribed suicide and other terrorist attacks. Syrian officials themselves urged

⁸ Peter Finn, "German Officials Link Hijackers To Al Qaeda Group," *The Washington Post*, September 27, 2001, P. A1

⁹ Herb Keinon, "Arms Flow to Hizbullah via Syria Slows," *The Jerusalem Post*, December 31, 2001

¹⁰ Howard Schneider, "Syria Evolves as Anti-Terror Ally," *The Washington Post*, July 25, 2002

¹¹ "President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership," at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020624-3.html>

¹² NA, "Syria Stands by Hezbollah," *BBC News Online*, July 1, 2002

¹³ *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001* at <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2001/html/10249.htm>.

¹⁴ Issam Hamza, "Syrian Defense Chief Meets PLO Guerrilla Leader," *Reuters*, May 21, 2001

¹⁵ "A May 2002 Interview with Hamas Commander of the Al Qassam Brigades," Special Dispatch—Palestinian Authority/Jihad and Terrorist Studies, No 403, The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), July 24, 2002, at www.MEMRI.org

Hamas and PIJ not to cease operations but to step up attacks as well. In May, Damascus reportedly offered Hamas direct Syrian financial aid if it renewed suicide bombers.¹⁶

Syria's hosting these group's leaders, providing them with some semblance of political cover, and facilitating their financing and operational planning frustrates U.S. efforts to deescalate Israeli-Palestinian violence, establish calm and initiate reform within the Palestinian Authority.

SPONSORING, TRAINING AND ARMING TERRORISTS

If any trends can be discerned, evidence suggests that Syrian efforts to promote terrorism have expanded under Bashar al-Assad's rule. Since Bashar took office, Israeli authorities have uncovered more than twenty Hamas activists who were recruited in various Arab countries and sent to Syria for terrorist training.¹⁷ The recruits received weapons training, as well as lessons in the preparation of explosives, intelligence activities, hostage taking, and suicide operations.

Last week, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage identified Hizballah as "the A team of terrorism," and warned that "their time will come, there's no question about it."¹⁸ In fact, there is no dealing with Hizballah without first dealing with Syria. According to press reports, Syria has actually integrated elements of Hizballah's military units into the Syrian army in Lebanon and, in a sharp break from the caution exercised by his father, Bashar al Assad has started supplying Hizballah with heavy arms itself (on top of Iranian arms transshipped via Damascus), including a new 220 mm rocket.¹⁹

Additionally, since Assad inherited the presidency from his father, there is strong evidence that the Syrian-backed Hizballah has moved energetically into the Palestinian arena—both by sending its own operatives to attempt terrorism inside Israel, as in the case of Jihad "Gerard" Shuman, arrested in January 2001,²⁰ and by establishing links with terrorist groups in the West Bank, Gaza, and among Israeli Arabs. For example, Hizballah operatives working with Force 17 colonel Masoud Ayad in Gaza reportedly directed small arms and mortar attacks against Israeli civilians in Gaza.²¹ In June 2002, Israeli authorities conducting a search in Hebron arrested a Hizballah operative who had entered the country on a Canadian passport.²² The arrest of this individual coincided with the discovery in Hebron of mines previously only used by Hizballah in Lebanon.²³ Hizballah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corp are more active in Lebanon than ever, including recruiting, training, and dispatching a cell of Palestinians which killed 7 Israelis in a cross-border raid on the northern Israeli community of Metsuba in March 2002.²⁴ Hizballah has also engaged in a proactive effort to recruit Israeli-Arabs to provide intelligence on Israel and logistical support for terrorist operations. Israeli authorities have broken several cells of Israeli-Arabs associated with Hizballah and other "Lebanese groups," including a four-person cell suspected of passing "computer programs, maps, various objects and documents which may constitute intelligence" through the village of Ghajjar (which straddles the Blue Line separating Israel and Lebanon) to groups in Lebanon in exchange for drugs and weapons.²⁵ Similarly, a Hizballah operative recruited a terrorist cell of Israeli Arabs from the Galilee village of Abu Snan, which was uncovered by Israeli authorities as the group was planning kidnapping operations that would have targeted Israeli soldiers.²⁶ In July 2002, Israeli authorities arrested Hussein Ali al-Khatib and Hatem Ahmad al-Khatib, two

¹⁶Zeev Schiff, "Sources Say Syria Pushing Hamas to Renew Attacks," *Haaretz*, May 20, 2002

¹⁷Amos Harel, "Shin Bet Arrests more than Twenty Hamas Activists," *Canadian Jewish News*, October 4, 2001

¹⁸US Deputy Secretary of State: Hizballah—"A Team of Terrorism," *www.Albawaba.com*, September 6, 2002; "Hizballah Says Will Defend Lebanon from US Threats," *Reuters*, September 6, 2002

¹⁹Zeev Schiff, "Don't Underestimate Assad Jr.," *Haaretz*, August 2, 2002

²⁰Jack Katzenell, "Barak Signs Six Month Detention Order Against Lebanese Suspect," *AP Worldstream*, February 21, 2001

²¹NA, "IDF abducts Force 17 Member in Gaza, Arrests 4 Hamas activists," *Ha'aretz Daily*, January 2, 2002

²²Lenny Ben-David, "Iran, Syria and Hizballah: Threatening Israel's North," Jerusalem Issue Brief, vol 2, no 3, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, July 18, 2002

²³Lenny Ben-David, "Iran, Syria and Hizballah: Threatening Israel's North," Jerusalem Issue Brief, vol 2, no 3, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, July 18, 2002

²⁴Lenny Ben-David, "Iran, Syria and Hizballah: Threatening Israel's North," Jerusalem Issue Brief, vol 2, no 3, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, July 18, 2002

²⁵NA, "Israel Arrests Arabs Spying for Lebanese Groups," *The Daily Star* (Beirut), August 6, 2002

²⁶Dina Kraft, "Seven Israeli Arabs Charged with Spying for Lebanese Guerillas," *AP Worldstream*, November 29, 2000

Syrians from the Golan who, on top of smuggling weapons and drugs, were spying on Israel and passing classified information to Hizballah contacts.²⁷ In fact, Hizballah operatives are known to have gone to Europe, where they picked up false identification and travel documents and continue on to Israel, the West Bank and Gaza to train and assist Palestinian terrorist groups.

The Israeli navy's seizure of the Karine-A weapons boat—in which Hizballah played a central role, according to evidence that State Department spokesman Richard Boucher called “compelling”—is not the only example of weapons smuggling tied to Syria and its proxies. In December 2001, for example, Jordan's State Security Court tried three Islamists accused of smuggling weapons secured from Syria to the West Bank to be used in attacks on Israelis.²⁸ Two other defendants remain at large, including Abd al-Muti Abu Miliq; Abu Miliq is a Palestinian with Syrian travel documents who was sentenced to fifteen years of hard labor in absentia in the September 2000 trial of twenty-eight Islamists plotting terrorist attacks at the turn of the millennium.²⁹ In June 2000, Israel arrested a Lebanese citizen traveling from Syria to the West Bank via the Allenby Bridge as he attempted to smuggle weapons—including katyusha rockets—in his vehicle.³⁰ In January 2002, an Israeli court unsealed indictments against five Druze residents of the Golan who were caught smuggling Claymore roadside bombs and hand grenades across the Syrian-Israeli border. The weapons, bearing operating instructions for achieving maximum casualties and damage to “people and vehicles,” were to be delivered to the West Bank.³¹

In February 2002, Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres told a press conference outside the UN in New York that with Syria's blessing Hizballah had deployed 10,000 rockets capable of penetrating well into Israel to southern Lebanon.³² The Christian Science Monitor reported in February that “well informed sources” referred to “truck[load] after truckload” of weapons that arrived in southern Lebanon from May 2000 to December 2001.³³

Hizballah also remains a direct threat to U.S. interests. According to senior U.S. officials, Sheikh Nasrallah and Imad Mugniyeh are known to be working together in planning terror attacks globally and across the United Nations certified Blue Line separating Israel and Lebanon. Hizballah operatives continue to surveil US interests (among others) and plan attacks. Hizballah cells are active not only in the Middle East, but in East and Southeast Asia, Africa, Europe, South and Central America, and, as the case against Mohammad and Chawki Hammoud in North Carolina recently highlighted, the United States.

Hizballah is not the only terrorist group of global reach to enjoy the fruits of Syrian state sponsorship. Just five days after Syria assumed the rotating presidency of the U.N. Security Council, Damascus-based PIJ leader Ramadan Abdullah Shallah claimed responsibility for the June 5, 2002, suicide bus bombing at the Megiddo junction in northern Israel that killed 17 people and wounded over 40 more.³⁴ In interviews with al Jazeera and other media outlets, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres stated that Shallah in fact ordered the Megiddo attack from his Damascus headquarters.³⁵ In fact, Shallah and other PIJ leaders in Damascus maintained close contact with a number of PIJ operatives on the ground in the West Bank. One such operative was Tarek Az Aldin, a senior PIJ operative from the Jenin area, who served as a coordinator for several PIJ terrorist cells in the West Bank as well as “the link to the movement's central headquarters in Syria.”³⁶ Another Damascus-West Bank link was Taabat Mardawi, a senior PIJ operative re-

²⁷ NA, “Israel Announces the Arrest of Two Syrians in the Golan,” *Al Sharq Al Awsat*, August 8, 2002

²⁸ John Kifner, “Jordan, Holding off a Neighbor's Wildfire, Plays Down an Arms-Smuggling Case,” *The New York Times*, March 22, 2002

²⁹ NA, “Three Islamists tried in Jordan deny planning anti-Israeli Attacks,” *AFP*, December 24, 2001

³⁰ NA, “Jordan Arrests Three Armed Men Who Tried to Infiltrate Israel,” *AFP*, July 21, 2001

³¹ Prime Minister's Media Advisor, “ISA Uncovers Golan Weapons Infiltration,” Office of the Prime Minister of Israel, January 9, 2002

³² Nicholas Blanford, “Emboldened By US Jibes, Hizbullah Prepares For War,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 8, 2002

³³ Nicholas Blanford, “Emboldened By US Jibes, Hizbullah Prepares For War,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 8, 2002

³⁴ NA, “Bloody Irony in Syria's Security Council Presidency,” *The Houston Chronicle*, June 18, 2002

³⁵ Herb Keinon, David Rudge and Melissa Radler, “Peres: Syria to Blame for Attack,” *The Jerusalem Post*, June 7, 2002

³⁶ NA, “Arrest of a Leader Islamic Jihad Operative,” IDF Spokesperson Press Release, June 20, 2002, at www.imra.org

responsible for the death of 20 people and injury of 150 others, who “was instructed and operated by the PIJ headquarters in Syria, with which he was in contact.”³⁷

Documents seized by Israel indicate that Ramadan Shallah himself transfers funds from Damascus to the personal bank accounts of individual PIJ terrorists such as Bassam al Saadi, an operative responsible for PIJ finances in Jenin.³⁸ In one case, Shallah sent Saadi \$127,000 to “aid the families of those killed or arrested,” but the funds somehow “disappeared.” This, and another case in which \$31,000 failed to reach Ali Safuri, have created significant internal rifts with the organization over charges of internal corruption.³⁹

Beyond harboring PIJ leaders who order, plan and finance terror attacks, Syria actively promotes PIJ terrorism by facilitating terrorist training by its proxies on its soil. Through the interrogations of Nasser Aweiss and other senior al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and PIJ operatives, Israeli authorities learned that members of al Aqsa, PIJ and other Palestinian groups have been undergoing terrorist training in Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command (PFLP–GC) camps south of Damascus. Traveling through Jordan, the Palestinian trainees are met at the Jordanian-Syrian border by Syrian officials who check their names against a pre-approved list and escort them to camps run by Ahmed Jibril’s PFLP–GC. Iranian-funded PFLP–GC instructors train the Palestinians in terrorist tactics, while Syrian officials remain on the sidelines assuring the trainees are properly cared for. Ziad Nafa, a former PFLP–GC member, told a Jordanian court in February that one of the thirteen suspects on trial for plotting to bomb the U.S. embassy in Amman asked him to arrange terrorist training for the group in Syria.⁴⁰ Aware of this and other similar training camps, Senator Bob Graham, Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence announced in July 2002 that the “training camps that have developed particularly in Syria and Lebanon where the next generation of terrorists are being prepared” pose an even greater risk to the United States than Iraq.⁴¹

Beyond Hizballah, Hamas and PIJ, Syria supports the most radical elements in Lebanon’s lawless Palestinian refugee camps and encourages their engagement in anti-Israeli terrorism. For example, both the Return Brigades (*Kata’ed al Awda*), an amalgam of secular and Islamist Palestinian groups dominated by Fatah radicals from Nablus, Jenin and Tulkarm, and *al-Nathir* (the Harbinger) another radical Fatah offshoot, have been linked to renegade Fatah Colonel Munir al Maqdash (Abu Hassan), who is closely linked to Syria and Iran.⁴² The Return Brigades has taken credit for several shootings such the February 19, 2002, ambush that killed six IDF soldiers and the February 27, 2002, murder of an Israeli in the Atarot industrial zone of Jerusalem.⁴³ In August 2002, the Return Brigades reportedly tried to assassinate the head of PA General Intelligence in a roadside shooting attack between Nablus and Jenin near Tubas.⁴⁴ Al Maqdash, whose headquarters is in the Ayn al-Hilweh refugee camp in Lebanon, was sentenced to death in absentia by a Jordanian court in 2001, and is also wanted by Lebanese authorities.⁴⁵ PA officials believe Al Maqdash was behind a Return Brigades leaflet distributed in Nablus and Jenin in August 2002 announcing that several Israeli leaders were on its “hit list.”⁴⁶ According to a mainstream Fatah official, al Maqdash “has very good ties

³⁷ NA, “Jenin, the Capital of the Palestinian Suicide Terrorists,” Israel Defense Forces, April 18, 2002, Appendix C: Characteristics of Two Arch-Terrorists from the Jenin Area Captured by the IDF, at <http://www.idf.il/english/news/jenin.stm>

³⁸ NA, “The Cooperation Between Fatah and the PA Security Apparatuses with PIJ and Hamas in the Jenin Area,” Israel Defense Forces, April 9, 2002, at <http://www.idf.il/jenin/site/english/main—index.stm>

³⁹ NA, “The Cooperation Between Fatah and the PA Security Apparatuses with PIJ and Hamas in the Jenin Area,” Israel Defense Forces, April 9, 2002, at <http://www.idf.il/jenin/site/english/main—index.stm>

⁴⁰ Daniel Sobelman, “Jordan to Indict 18 on Terror-linked Charges,” *Ha’aretz Daily*, February 7, 2002

⁴¹ Janine Zacharia, “Terrorist Camps in Lebanon, Syria Bigger Threat to U.S. Than Iraq,” *The Jerusalem Post*, July 8, 2002

⁴² Khaled Abu Toameh, “New Fatah Groups Controlled by PLO Dissident in Lebanon,” *The Jerusalem Post*, August 26, 2002

⁴³ Dan Grushkin, “Palestinian Gunmen Kill Six in Ambush on Israeli Army Checkpoint,” *Agence France Presse*, February 19, 2002; NA “Eight People Die as Mideast Violence Continues Unabated,” *Agence France Presse*, February 27, 2002

⁴⁴ Khaled Abu Toameh, “New Fatah Groups Controlled by PLO Dissident in Lebanon,” *The Jerusalem Post*, August 26, 2002

⁴⁵ Hugh Dellios, “Six Get Death in Jordan Terrorism Plot,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 19, 2000

⁴⁶ Khaled Abu Toameh, “New Fatah Groups Controlled by PLO Dissident in Lebanon,” *The Jerusalem Post*, August 26, 2002

with Syria and Iran. These countries pay him millions of dollars. He is using the money to undermine the local Fatah leadership and establish his own bases of power here.”⁴⁷ According to press reports, Iran has traditionally funded Palestinian dissident groups in the Lebanese refugee camps, including al Maqdah, through the Institute of the Palestinian Martyrs.⁴⁸ This is confirmed by Israeli authorities, who discovered al Maqdah’s link to terrorist elements in the West Bank when they arrested Nasser Aweis and Jamal Ahwal. Al Maqdah apparently sent Aweis between \$40,000 and \$50,000 for weapons, expenses and bomb-making materials, and Aweis reported back to al Maqdah by telephone on the success of his attacks.⁴⁹ Ahwal reportedly received an average of \$5,000 a week from al Maqdah for similar purposes.⁵⁰ Al Maqdah also funded Ahmed Abu Hamidan (abu Fahdi), a Colonel in the PA’s National Security Organization who manufactured explosives and supplied, funded and directed terrorists to carry out attacks.⁵¹

Syria’s proactive state sponsorship of terrorism carries over into Syrian-dominated Lebanon as well. As of August 2002, Iran was reported to have financed and established terrorist training camps in the Syrian-controlled Beka’a Valley to train Hizballah, Hamas, PIJ and PFLP–GC terrorists to use rockets such as the short range Fajr-5 missile and the SA–7 anti-aircraft rocket.⁵² The camps, including one in Khuraj near the Syrian border, were reported to be under the command of Iranian Republican Guard Corps (IRGC) General Ali Reza Tamzar, commander of IRGC activity in the Beka’a Valley.⁵³ According to a “Western intelligence agency” report, which puts the cost of the Iranian program at \$50 million, Tamzar’s IRGC detachment also trains the Lebanese and Palestinian terrorists to carry out “underwater suicide operations.”⁵⁴ The Iranian terrorist training program was the result of a secret meeting held in the Tehran suburb of Darjah on June 1, 2002, in advance of a two-day conference in support of the Palestinian Intifada held in Tehran on June 1–2, 2002.⁵⁵

Furthermore, the terrorist activity facilitated by Syria in Lebanon is not limited to Hizballah and the motley crew of Palestinian terrorist groups operating freely in Lebanon. Recently, al Qaeda terrorists reportedly have been taking advantage of the lack of central rule, nests of terrorism like the Ayn al-Hilweh refugee camp, and the willing assistance of sympathetic groups to provide al Qaeda members shelter and support.⁵⁶ Some 150–200 al Qaeda operatives have reportedly found refuge in the Ayn al Hilweh refugee camp, and bin Laden’s son and wife are said to have come and gone from Syria several times since September 2001.⁵⁷ According to American and European intelligence officials cited in *The Washington Post*, Hizballah is “increasingly teaming up with al Qaeda on logistics and training for terrorist operations.”⁵⁸ The alliance is described as “ad hoc,” “tactical,” and “informal,” involving

⁴⁷ Khaled Abu Toameh, “New Fatah Groups Controlled by PLO Dissident in Lebanon,” *The Jerusalem Post*, August 26, 2002

⁴⁸ NA, “PLO Bids to Win Back Refugee Support,” *Agence France-Presse*, July 5, 1994; Muntasser Abdallah, “Iran Pours Thousands of Dollars in Lebanon’s Palestinian Camps,” *Agence France-Presse*, June 21, 2002

⁴⁹ NA, “Senior Fatah Militant in Lebanon Directed and Financed Serious Terror Attacks in Territories and Israel,” Press Release Communicated by Israeli Prime Minister’s Media Advisor, May 26, 2002, at <http://www.imra.org.il>

⁵⁰ NA, “Senior Fatah Militant in Lebanon Directed and Financed Serious Terror Attacks in Territories and Israel,” Press Release Communicated by Israeli Prime Minister’s Media Advisor, May 26, 2002, at <http://www.imra.org.il>

⁵¹ NA, “The Link Between the Palestinian Authority and Terrorist Activity,” Press Release from IDF Spokesman, April 26, 2002, at <http://www.imra.org.il>

⁵² NA, “Iran Establishes Rocket Training Centers in Lebanon,” *Middle East Newsline*, August 8, 2002

⁵³ NA, “Iran Establishes Rocket Training Centers in Lebanon,” *Middle East Newsline*, August 8, 2002

⁵⁴ Nicholas Blanford, “Report Claims Iran Running Bekaa Training Camp,” *Daily Star* (Beirut), August 13, 2002 (the article also appeared in Arabic in the Beirut daily *An Nahar*, August 13, 2002)

⁵⁵ Nicholas Blanford, “Report Claims Iran Running Bekaa Training Camp,” *Daily Star* (Beirut), August 13, 2002 (the article also appeared in Arabic in the Beirut daily *An Nahar*, August 13, 2002)

⁵⁶ John Cloud, Bruce Crumley, Helen Gibson, Scott MacLeod, Matt Rees, Elaine Shannon, “What Is Al-Qaeda Without Its Boss? The Answer: No Matter What Happens to Bin Laden, the Group Still Has Many Tentacles,” *Time*, November 26, 2001, P.50

⁵⁷ Zeev Schiff, “Syria has allowed hundreds of Qaida men to settle in Lebanon,” *Haaretz*, September 2, 2002

⁵⁸ Dana Priest and Douglas Farah, “Terror Alliance Has U.S. Worried; Hezbollah, al Qaeda Seen Joining Forces,” *The Washington Post*, June 30, 2002

mid- and low-level operatives.⁵⁹ American and European intelligence officials cited in the *Post* reiterated this concern just last week, noting “the most worrisome” of al Qaeda’s new “tactical, ad-hoc alliances” is with Hizballah.⁶⁰ Acknowledging that the cooperation between these Sunni and Shi’a groups marks a shift from their “years of rivalry,” the intelligence officials said al Qaeda and Hizballah have in fact “recently cooperated on explosives and tactics training, money laundering, weapons smuggling and acquiring forged documents.”⁶¹

Additionally, Lebanon’s willingness to harbor armed terrorist groups and militias and its tolerance of their activities comes at a cost to its own internal security. Fighting between various Islamist, Palestinian and Lebanese factions—including Hamas, Asbat al Ansar, and a collection of groups affiliated with or breakaways from Fatah—has turned the Ayn al-Hilweh refugee camp near Sidon into a battleground where children play with spent bullet cartridges and rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) casings.⁶² Some of the radical Islamists resisting arrest are reported to be al Qaeda insurgents who found refuge in the Ayn al Hilweh refugee camp.⁶³ Hizballah and the Shi’ite Amal militia have engaged in firefights in south Lebanon as they vie for influence over villages in the unpoliced south.⁶⁴

Convinced his group will be shielded from the war on terrorism, Hizballah’s Nasrallah publicly boasted that “Lebanon doesn’t put pressure on us, it tries to defend us.”⁶⁵ Nonetheless, the State Department refrained from listing Lebanon as a state sponsor of terrorism or even taking Lebanon to task in *Patterns of Global Terrorism* 2001. In fact, *Patterns* qualifies Lebanese support for Palestinian terrorist groups, noting the legitimate legal status they enjoy in Beirut.

It should be noted that Beirut is governed vicariously through Damascus, and to date the United States has satisfied itself with vicariously covering the issue of Lebanese sponsorship of terrorism under Syria’s designation as a state sponsor of terrorism. Similar technical considerations prevented the State Department from designating the Taliban’s Afghanistan as a state sponsor of terrorism, despite its now universally recognized role in serving as the premier breeding, planning and training ground for international terrorism. In the wake of September 11, Lebanese support for Syrian proxy terrorist groups—in the form of safe-haven, training camps and more—needs to be revisited.

A review of Syrian activity post-September 11 provides compelling evidence that the Assad regime remains an active sponsor of international terrorism, operating on many fronts and via many organizations. Indeed, of the seven state sponsors on the State Department’s list, Syria rivals Iran for conducting the most frenetic activity in support of terrorism. Syria cooperates closely with fellow state sponsor Iran in its support of Hizballah and Palestinian terrorist groups. While the Syrians have offered some assistance in terms of intelligence on al Qaeda, Syria has apparently decided to reject out of hand President Bush’s offer of amnesty vis-a-vis the anti-Israel terrorism most central to Syria’s regional policy. Moreover, Syria’s continued development of chemical weapons, coupled with its sponsorship of international terrorism, makes it an overly qualified candidate for inclusion in the “axis of evil.”⁶⁶

CHALLENGES FOR U.S. POLICY

With its longstanding support for terrorism, both pre- and post-September 11, Syria poses a unique challenge to U.S. antiterror strategy, especially as Damascus continues to sponsor terrorism despite President Bush’s June 24, 2002, demand that

⁵⁹ Dana Priest and Douglas Farah, “Terror Alliance Has U.S. Worried; Hezbollah, al Qaeda Seen Joining Forces,” *The Washington Post*, June 30, 2002

⁶⁰ Suan Schmidt and Dana Priest, “U.S. Fears Low-Level al Qaeda Attacks,” *The Washington Post*, September 9, 2002

⁶¹ Suan Schmidt and Dana Priest, “U.S. Fears Low-Level al Qaeda Attacks,” *The Washington Post*, September 9, 2002

⁶² NA, “Tense Situation Between Hamas and Fatah in Lebanon after Fifth Ayn al Hilweh Bombing,” *Al Sharq Al Awsat*, August 7, 2002; Nicholas Blanford, “Islamic Insurgents Stage Last Stand in Ain al-Hilweh,” *The Daily Star* (Beirut), August 14, 2002

⁶³ NA, “Al Qaida, Fatah Clash in Lebanon,” *Middle East Newsline*, August 14, 2002

⁶⁴ NA, “Tiff between Hizballah and Amal leads to open fire in the South Beirut,” *Al Hayat*, 08-23-02

⁶⁵ Frederic Bothorel, “Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, Leader of Hizballah: ‘Arafat is not the Legitimate Representative of the Palestinian People,’” *El Mundo* (Madrid), December 18, 2001

⁶⁶ See Dany Shoham, “Poisoned Missiles: Syria’s Doomsday Deterrent: All weaponized and some place to go,” *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol IX, No 4, Fall 2002 and Dany Shoham “Guile, Gas, and Germs: Syria’s Ultimate Weapons: They built them on the sly, with help from the West,” *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol IX, No 3, Summer 2002; See <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/world/syria/al-safir.htm> for commercial satellite photos of Syria’s Al Safir SCUD Base and Chemical Weapons Depot.

Syria “choose the right side in the war on terror.”⁶⁷ Unlike Iran—whose leaders orchestrate public chants of “Death to America, death to Israel” and thereby provide rhetorical context to their sponsorship of terrorism—Damascus proclaims its desire for warm ties with the United States and its commitment to a “comprehensive” peace with Israel. Specifically, Syria has benefited from its role in the Arab-Israeli peace process and its suzerainty over Lebanon. These factors have for years combined to provide Syria with a measure of protection against U.S. (and Israeli) antiterror initiatives.

In the wake of September 11, however, the goal of compelling change in Syrian support for terrorism must become a higher U.S. priority than ever before, in order to check Syria’s own sponsorship and cut off Iran’s outlet to terrorist groups in Lebanon. Only with creative and persistent effort can Washington compel Damascus to discard its use of terrorism-by-proxy. Any such effort must incorporate measures to allow Syria to save face while demanding it jettison terrorism as a state policy and shut down local terrorist groups. Having said that, Syrian must be held accountable for any continued double-dealing, i.e. providing some measure of cooperation in the war on al Qaeda while fanning the flames of other terrorist groups of global reach. As the United States considers what carrots and sticks to apply in its effort to motivate Syria, it should consider the need to apply inducements and consequences in tandem and in gradations: small carrots for small gestures, large sticks for large infractions.

The Syria Accountability Act represents a long overdue effort to hold Syria accountable for its sponsorship of terrorism, its development of chemical weapons, its illegal smuggling of \$1.1 billion in illicit Iraqi oil in violation of UN resolutions, its procurement of military hardware and spare parts for the Iraqi military, and its ongoing occupation of Lebanon.⁶⁸ In fact, despite this activity Syria remains the only State Sponsor of terrorism not subject to trade or investment bans, nor are Syrian diplomats subject to the same travel restrictions as diplomats from other states listed as sponsoring terrorism.

President Bush and a host of other senior officials have threatened to take Syria to task for its continued belligerent behavior, but have yet to follow through. The result is that American warnings and threats are not heard by the likes of Bashar al Assad, Yasir Arafat and even Saddam Hussein. Our inaction has caused us to diminish and devalue to power of our word, be it from the Oval Office, Foggy Bottom or the Hill. We have become background noise. Already, Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq al Sharaa boasts that “nobody can call Syria to account.”⁶⁹ He is wrong: we can, and we should.

In tandem with other economic, diplomatic and even military measures, the Syria Accountability Act would go a long way toward coaxing Damascus to shed its support for terrorist groups and fully engage in the war on terrorism and the quest for peace in the Middle East.⁷⁰

The administration should build on the President’s June 24, 2002, speech and deliver a clear cut message to senior Syrian officials—presumably in private—that groups like Hizballah and Hamas are, like al Qaeda, legitimate targets in the war on terrorism, and that continued sponsorship of such groups will come at a steep price. In the event Syria fails to respond to the President’s message, the administration should follow through with punitive measures.

ADDRESSING CRITICS

Critics of the Syria Accountability Act articulate four basic arguments, each of which is flawed:

⁶⁷ “President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership,” at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020624-3.html>

⁶⁸ Syria’s illicit oil trade with Iraq best exemplifies the ever-warming relationship between the regimes of Bashar al-Assad and Saddam Hussein. The 150,000-barrel-per-day Syrian pipeline into which the illicit Iraqi oil is pumped earns each country around \$1.1 billion a year. Assad reportedly promised Secretary of State Colin Powell several times during their meeting in February 2001 that he would register the Iraqi oil under the UN’s oil-for-food program; nevertheless, Syria has continued to pump the oil illicitly, undermining UN Security Council Resolution 1382 even as Syria assumed a seat on that council on January 1, 2002.

⁶⁹ Nicholas Blanford, “Syria Worries US Won’t Stop at Iraq,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 9, 2002

⁷⁰ For a review of some of these options, see Matthew Levitt, “Syria and the War on Terrorism: A Post 9–11 Assessment,” PolicyWatch numbers 595 and 596, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, January 2002, at www.washingtoninstitute.org

1. *Curtailing the administration's margin of maneuverability*

Senior administration officials have already articulated their concern that the Syria Accountability Act would deny them the flexibility necessary to conduct foreign policy and undermine its policy options related to Syria, Lebanon, and, by the message the Act would send, the larger Arab and world. In fact, the Act is an actionable manifestation of the President's own warning that those who sponsor terror will "be held accountable."

In a Thanksgiving speech delivered to army troops last November, President Bush said: "We fight the terrorists, and we fight all of those who give them aid. America has a message for the nations of the world: If you harbor a terrorist, you are a terrorist. If you feed a terrorist or fund a terrorist, you are a terrorist, *and you will be held accountable by the United States and our friends*" [emphasis added].⁷¹

In his speech to the United Nations that same month, the President asserted: "In this world, there are good causes and bad causes, and we may disagree on where the line is drawn. Yet, there is no such thing as a good terrorist. No national aspiration, no remembered wrong can ever justify the deliberate murder of the innocent. Any government that rejects this principle, trying to pick and choose its terrorist friends, *will know the consequences*" [emphasis added].⁷²

More recently, President Bush called on June 24 for Syria to close terrorist training camps and expel terrorist organizations. Assad is now waiting to see how much weight the President's spoken word carries.

Moreover, the "margin of maneuverability" some officials are concerned may be curtailed is in fact undermining the war on terror by sending Assad and others the clear message that sponsoring certain terrorist groups may be tolerated in return for some level of cooperation against other groups. Syria believes it can leverage cooperation related to the interrogation of Mohammed Zammar for American indifference related to its continued terrorist activities. In this vein, Bashar al Assad publicly threatened that "if they [America] continue to call Syria a terrorist nation, I will talk about it," referring to the intelligence cooperation targeting al Qaeda that the U.S. purportedly wanted kept secret.⁷³

Finally, the Syria Accountability Act incorporates a presidential "national security interest" waiver clause and, indicating its respect for the administration's need for flexibility, only requires the government to select two of the five most sensitive proposed sanctions.

2. *Pushing Syria into Iraq's arms*

Syria is already running fast and hard into Iraq's arms. Initiatives like the Syria Accountability Act are necessary to establish consequences for just this kind of behavior. The Act would force Syria to reassess its strategic decision to side with Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, against U.S. efforts to liberate the average Iraqi from Saddam's oppressive, tyrannical regime. On the first anniversary of the September 11 attacks, Syrian, Lebanese and Iraqi Transportation Ministers met in Beirut to discuss "tripartite transportation cooperation."⁷⁴ Such cooperation would enable Syria to enhance the existing illicit oil trade and illegal arms procurement programs between Syria and Iraq and lead to further violations of United Nations Security Resolutions (even as Syria sits on the UN Security Council). The arms Syria has procured for Iraq include refurbished T-55 tank engines, anti-aircraft cannon, MiG 29 engines, spare parts for MiG 21s, 23s and 25s, military trucks, and radar systems.⁷⁵

Just as in the war on terrorism, Syria needs to "choose the right side" when it comes to Iraq. Left to its own volition, it will either avoid making a decision (entrenching the unacceptable status quo) or make decisions that are inimical to the average Iraqi suffering under Saddam Hussein and to U.S. interests.

3. *Undermining Syrian reform*

Some apologists have even voiced concern that holding Syria accountable for its blatant support of international terrorism might discourage the "reformist tendencies" of Syria's "youthful" president. In fact, despite Bashar's promising and optimistic inauguration speech in June 2000, the youthful president has demonstrated

⁷¹ President Bush, remarks to troops and families, Fort Campbell, Kentucky, Nov. 21, 2001, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/11/20011121-3.html>.

⁷² President George Bush, remarks to the United Nations General Assembly, Nov. 10, 2001, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/11/print/20011110-3.html>.

⁷³ Gareth Smyth, "Challenge to Syria Gets Dusty Answer in Damascus," *Financial Times*, June 26, 2002.

⁷⁴ BEIRUT, Lebanon, Sept. 11 (SANA-Official Syrian News Agency), at <http://www.sana.org/english/headlines/11.9/syria-Leb-Iraq.htm>

⁷⁵ Zeev Schiff, "Syria Buys Arms for Iraq in Eastern Europe," *Haaretz*, July 15, 2002

an uncanny ability to avoid rocking the boat of Syrian elites. Early measures taken to liberalize the banking industry and crack down on corruption have fizzled. Today, there is no real evidence of what was at its height slow and almost imperceptible reform. While some civilians have been jailed on corruption charges, the most seriously corrupt element of Syrian society, the Syrian military, has been left untouched. The recent closure of the Lebanese MTV television station is just the most recent manifestation of the Syrian crack down on Lebanese society.

Bashar has surrounded himself by an old guard comprised of his father's loyalists, and only broken from his father's mold by shedding his father's caution and becoming more directly involved in terrorism (such as directly supplying Hizballah with weapons from Syrian stockpiles and establishing a close, personal bond with Sheik Hassan Nasrallah).

And there has been no reform when it comes to Syrian support for terrorism. When a suicide bomber murdered 15 at a pool hall outside Tel Aviv, Syria's state-controlled radio lauded "the wonderful and special suicide attacks" as a "practical declaration before the whole world of the way to liberate Arab Palestinian land." Just two days before the September 11 attacks, Syria's state-appointed grand mufti, Ahmad Kaftaro, described "the heroic suicide operations" as "a natural and legitimate reaction that must be blessed in so far as we reject the Zionist crimes against out people of Palestine."⁷⁶ Damascus openly flaunts its support for terrorism, and is hardly engaged in either domestic or foreign policy reform.

4. *We can't do everything at once*

Finally, senior members of the administration warn that the United States has multiple, sometimes competing, foreign policy and national security interests and that they can not all be pursued with equal vigor at once. Attempting to do so, the theory goes, would undermine them all. In fact, each of these critical interests feeds into the next, and failure to deal with any one will undermine our ability to deal with the others. The administration must think strategically about all its goals and understand how they impact one another. The world does not operate in a linear fashion, and events do not occur in simple consecutive order. The consequences of failing to understand this are daunting.

For example, when U.S. Ambassador to Beirut Vincent Battle told the Beirut *Daily Star* that Hizballah attacks against Israeli positions on the Israeli side of the UN demarcated Blue Line did "not fall within the rubric" of international terrorism, he inadvertently legitimized the activities of the most professional terrorist group of global reach on the State Department's list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO) and sent contradicting messages not only to Hizballah, but to every other terrorist group, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, the Palestinian Authority and all the states the administration is courting in the war on terror and the liberation of Iraq. The Ambassador's remarks stand in stark contrast to Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage's warning that the United States will eventually take Hizballah to task for its terrorist actions.

In another case, senior leaders of the Jordanian Islamic Action Front, an Islamist party affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, met with Ambassador Christopher Ross in July. Just two weeks later, the day after a Hamas bombing at Jerusalem's Hebrew University killed seven civilians, including five Americans, the IAF sponsored a mass rally in support of Hamas and the "Jenin martyrs" at which IAF leaders proudly lauded the university bombing as a "bold, heroic operation." Addressing the rally, the group's Secretary General, Hamza Mansour, highlighted the Islamic Action Front's commitment to supporting Hamas and asserted that the Hebrew University attack cost \$50,000, which "this necessitates giving large financial aid to the Palestinian people to carry out more operations of this kind." Mansour further urged the Jordanian people and Arab nation "to contribute generously to the Palestinian people so that they could buy the weapons and necessary equipment for confronting the Israeli arrogance."

In the matrix of foreign policy goals, we must deploy the talent at our disposal to address U.S. national interests in a comprehensive fashion. The war on terrorism, liberating Iraq, deescalating Israeli-Palestinian violence, reinvigorating the Middle East peace process, and bolstering America's perception in the Middle East are all critical action items on the American foreign policy agenda, and can not be addressed one at a time. We have a formidable bureaucracy capable of multitasking.

⁷⁶"Syrian Grand Mufti Publicly Endorses Suicide Attacks," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, vol 3, no 9, September 2001

CONCLUSION

Inducing Syria to abandon its support for terrorism through financial, diplomatic, or even military pressure will not be easy, even if such measures are coupled with face-saving gestures. Nevertheless, it is essential that the United States follow through on its declared policy of zero tolerance for state sponsorship of terrorism. U.S. officials have stated unequivocally that such sponsorship must end, and that the organizations supported by Syria are terrorist groups of "global reach." History shows that an even greater risk to U.S. interests will emerge if Washington fails to live up to its word; such a failure will ensure that future pleas to end terror become diplomatic background noise.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you, Mr. Levitt.

Mr. Levitt, the European Union decided to designate the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine of its terrorist organization, yet Hezbollah remains absent from the list. Does their unwillingness to address Hezbollah's terrorist agenda complicate our efforts to pressure Syria and Lebanon of bringing in Hezbollah and put an end to its attacks in Israel? What are we doing to address those concerns with our European allies?

Mr. LEVITT. The Administration has demarched, bilaterally and multilaterally, individual European nations and the European Union on these issues. In fact, in its latest PLOCCA Report, the State Department took issue with the Palestinian authority for complaining that the PFLP was added to all these lists, and took the PA to task for claiming that there are separate military and political wings of these organizations, which is a falsehood.

It is a problem that Europe is not as on board as we would like them to be and it is a problem when the new Ambassador to Lebanon openly declared that in his view, Hezbollah is not a terrorist organization. It's no less a problem that U.S. officials have stated that certain types of Hezbollah attacks are something other than terrorism.

We are sending mixed messages. When the President says one thing, and we act in another way, we're doing the same thing. We are sending a very different message.

Frankly, I don't see how we can approach our European partners and take them to task for basically being two-faced on this issue when we are doing the same thing. We've said we are going to hold Syria accountable.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Levitt, doesn't Syria work against al-Qaeda in its own interest, and could you describe its motivations other than getting a pass from U.S. government?

Mr. LEVITT. I'm sorry, I couldn't hear the end of your question.

Mr. GILMAN. Could you describe its motivations other than getting a pass from our own government?

Mr. LEVITT. The cooperation we received from Syria is limited to al-Qaeda. Let's not call it Sunni extremism because there are plenty of Sunni extremist groups that they sponsor. The Syrian regime is an Alawite regime. It's run by a minority. It's considered an infidel by mainstream Islam, both Shia and Sunni. It has regime stability concerns. So whenever anything comes up that could potentially undermine the stability of the Syrian regime, you can believe they act. In this tiny little window, we have a shared interest, not shared values, but we have an obvious concern with al-Qaeda and all international terrorism, and the Syrians have an interest in

crushing any type of radical Sunni extremism that threaten the regime.

Others this morning have already mentioned the gassing attacks of Sunni extremists in Syria. There is a long record of Syrian action against Sunni extremists that it perceived as threatening its regime.

If these elements were perceived as not threatening the regime, they would not act against them at all.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you. Ambassador Gabriel, Syria is, and I assume you agree, occupying Lebanon. What are its objectives? What benefits does Syria derive from Lebanon? Isn't it believed by the Syrians that Lebanon is part of Greater Syria? Isn't that why there is no Syrian Ambassador to Lebanon?

Mr. GABRIEL. Mr. Chairman, I believe—well, what we hear from Syria is that they are in Lebanon because of security and military needs. They say that there were invited there in 1976 as part of the Arab Deterrent Force and they are simply living up to the security needs for themselves and for Lebanon.

But there is a body of intellectuals that will tell you, Mr. Chairman, that Syria has no intention of ever leaving Lebanon. I am of the opinion that it is very important for America to have a very strong position on Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity; and without American leadership, we won't get there.

I don't believe, Mr. Chairman, that the sanctions bill will get us there, though.

Mr. GILMAN. What about Syria's implementation of the Taif Accords? What are we doing to try to get them to implement that?

Mr. GABRIEL. What is America doing? I don't think anything, Mr. Chairman. That is one of the questions I would have. What is America doing to push forward on implementation of the Taif Accords? Now that is a very substantive question that I think we should have, and perhaps, could lead to the goals and objectives, by the way, that I think we all share here.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Reinsch, the Syrian press controlled by that country's government seems quite upset about this bill becoming law. If this law would not have any impact on Syria, I assume their must be some reason for them objecting to it.

Mr. REINSCH. Well, you would have to ask them, Mr. Chairman. I assume they would regard, and I assume their government would regard it as both an affront and as an insult, but that's between our government and theirs. We don't believe that the sanctions would have an economic impact. I haven't seen the article that you referred to. Did they argue that it would have a large economic impact on their country?

Mr. GILMAN. Apparently, they are objecting pretty strenuously.

Mr. REINSCH. Well, I can see them objecting to the bill. If they object to it on economic grounds, I would very much like to see the article and I could comment in more detail.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Reinsch, if Hezbollah took action against some of our business interests in Lebanon, such as maybe a kidnapping or two, would that change your views?

Mr. REINSCH. In situations like that, we would expect our government to take the appropriate action.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you, Mr. Reinsch.

Mr. Engel?

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me first say to Dr. Saadi, I'm glad that he restated the position that the Maronite Church supports the leaving of Lebanon by the Syrians because I think that's important, and therefore, thinks that this bill is the most effective way of doing so.

We all know when they all go back to Lebanon, and there is pressure put on them, that there are certain things they cannot say. When they are in this country, they can feel more free to express their opinion. I'm glad you made that point, Dr. Saadi, and I am wondering if you would care to expand on that.

Dr. SAADI. Well, the point can't be emphasized enough, Mr. Engel, that people in Lebanon say one thing and believe another because of fear. I think Mr. Rohrabacher said he didn't hear anything while he was in Lebanon. I wouldn't expect that he would because they are under great threats, including death. To state that eight bishops went back to Lebanon from a five-continent conference and were threatened, this is very serious stuff. That is why they don't talk.

There is a journalist from the MURR TV who this week has been threatened, and his entire family has been threatened.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you. Ambassador Gabriel, I took down some of the quotes that you mentioned. You said that the bill was not in the best interest of the United States. That Syria has supposedly cooperated on the war on terrorism. That we should, instead, use diplomacy and quiet persuasion. If this bill were to pass, we would lose our leverage on Lebanon.

It seems to me there is a disconnect here because it may be diplomatic niceties, with all due respect, are what you're used to; but the diplomatic niceties have not changed Syrian policy one iota in all these years. Since 1979, the State Department has put them on the list of terrorist nations. You agree that we all want Syria out of Lebanon. You agree that the Syrian behavior is reprehensible. Yet, you really don't offer anything else but quiet diplomacy, which has failed us for 23 years. So I would say, with all due respect, this bill attempts to put some teeth into our policy.

As Mr. Levitt point out, quite rightly, I don't believe we can talk out of both sides of our mouth. We can say one thing about the war on terrorism and then on the other hand, kind of look the other way when it comes to Syria. So I would just say, other than diplomacy and leverage, which hasn't worked, what would you do?

Mr. GABRIEL. Thank you very much, Mr. Engel, for asking that question. I have been wanting to offer my opinions on this.

First of all, let me quote from the patriarch of the Maronite Church in a private meeting with me. He is against the Syrian Accountability Act. He said it is not wise to get Syria out of Lebanon with enmity. If there is no accord with Syria, Syria will intervene with its allies all the more. Lebanon's interest is to be a good friend with Syria.

I also met with many of the hierarchy of the Maronite Church in this country recently, and they told me—directly that they really weren't for the bill as much as for the debate. May I put that on the record.

Mr. ENGEL. May I just say—because the question for me is not whether one group is for it or against it.

Mr. GABRIEL. Right. I just want to clear the record, Mr. Engel.

Mr. ENGEL. The question is, you talk about diplomacy and quiet persuasion, and let me just ask you how has diplomacy and quiet persuasion for 23 years gotten us any closer to the withdrawal of Syria from Lebanon. I mean, it would seem logical to me that pressure on Damascus is needed to get Syria to remove its armed forces from Lebanon, wouldn't you agree?

Mr. GABRIEL. Mr. Engel, I would like to answer that question. I don't argue with you that we have not moved forward very far with Syria along the lines that you have articulated, but I don't believe, quite frankly, Mr. Engel, and I'm being clinical about this, not anything else. I don't believe that we are going to see sanctions lead to a change in the way Syria operates in the region that you are talking about. I don't see it. I only see us losing leverage, and we are left—

Mr. ENGEL. Well, I don't know what leverage we have. We haven't gotten them to leave Lebanon in 23 years.

Mr. GABRIEL. If I may finish. You are left with only military measures, if we do that, in my opinion, Mr. Engel. I commend you for introducing this bill because I think the debate is the most important thing we've had.

However, I would suggest, and I would ask a couple of questions. If we care so much about Lebanon sovereignty, why is it that Lebanon's sovereignty is not part the Comprehensive Peace Settlement? Why isn't it? Why has not America weighed in on the enforcement of the Taif Accords? Why does American policy toward Lebanon always defer to its other primary interest in the region.

Let's be honest with ourselves. We don't have a strong U.S. American policy that guarantees the sovereignty and integrity of Lebanon. I would like to work with you and others to find that out, but I don't think sanctions, quite frankly, will get us there. All it does is reduce our leverage to move forward will not change opinions in the region.

Mr. GILMAN. The gentleman's time has expired. Mr. Rohrabacher? I am going to turn the Chair over to Mr. Rohrabacher since I have another meeting to attend to.

I want to thank our panelists for being here, and for your extensive testimony that will be very helpful to our Committee as we weigh this measure. Mr. Rohrabacher?

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Before the Chairman manages to leave, let me just say that it has been my honor to work with Ben Gilman, and he has been a shining light of integrity and hard work in this Committee. He has taught me what it means to be a responsible congressman. So Ben, you will be sorely missed, but we got a lot of things to do before you get out the door.

Now that I have taken over the Chair, I am going to call on my good friend, Mr. Berman, and let him proceed with his questioning.

Mr. BERMAN. Ambassador Gabriel, in a way you have made an argument for this bill, and the movement of this bill because you keep talking about trying to get the Administration to focus on our very serious problems with Syria. I think it might be fair to say that it is the introduction of this bill, and its movement, that will

focus that much as some of the earlier legislation in the previous Administrations focused the Administration on Russian and Chinese proliferation of weapons of mass destruction technology to Iraq and to Iran.

Mr. GABRIEL. I absolutely agree that the introduction of the bill focused attention and has created important debate. But its passage would not accomplish the goals set out in this legislation.

Mr. BERMAN. Now as a supporter of the bill, I guess I would like to ask Mr. Levitt—I recall several things in recent history that were sort of said authoritatively. One was that one thing about the Syrians, when you made a deal with the Syrians, the deal stuck. And primarily, the argument was in the context of observing the red lines in terms of Syrian incursions into Israel or shootings.

Secondly, we used to count on this incredible hostility between the Syrian regime and the Iraq regime based on the hostility of similar parties. The Ba'ath parties of both countries and a deep enmity. In fact, Syria joined our coalition in the original Gulf War.

What has happened to deal with that historic rivalry that has changed the situation to allow this much closer cooperation between Syria and Iraq, including helping Iraq rebuild its military capabilities?

Third, this notion that Colin Powell went to Syria and said you had better constrain Hezbollah and what's its doing or Israel will deal with them. Now do you think that Syria then put restraints on Hezbollah because of their desire for better relations with the United States or because they didn't want to contemplate what Israel might do in response to continued Hezbollah attacks? How about those three for starters?

Mr. LEVITT. Thank you for asking those questions. Let me try them in the reverse order because this is a point I wanted to raise. A number of people have been commenting they didn't think that this bill would accomplish all the things it sets out to do; and frankly, that's only one of the two main things that this bill is out to do.

The second thing I think that the bill will accomplish, and there is no question it will, certainly take positive steps toward accomplishing this, is revitalizing the power of our deterrent word. The case you cited is a perfect example. When Powell went to Syria and said that he wanted attacks across the Blue Line to stop, the only reason those attacks stopped is because the Syrians knew—because Powell told them—this was the message that Israel will retaliate.

You know what, the Syrians know that when Israel says they are going to do it, they're going to do it. If Powell had said I want those attacks across the Blue Line to stop or else we're going to get angry and there will be consequences, nothing would have happened. I guarantee you.

So I do think that this bill will make positive steps toward achieving all these important goals if for no other reason than because it will show Syria that we mean business, and it doesn't stop there. Then we've got to continue with diplomacy and all these other issues. I don't think this means that tomorrow, after we pass the bill, the next step is military. That doesn't have to be the case.

In terms of this Syrian-Iraqi relationship, what changed is a lot has changed in the international arena in the region and in terms

of convenience. The oil deal is extremely important. The Syrian economy is in tatters. It's in shambles. The Iraqi oil deal pumps in approximately \$1.1 billion dollars annually, each, to Syria and Iraq. That can't be looked over.

You have two regimes that in the past year have been a focus of attention—not just because of their being Ba'ath regimes, et cetera—that recognize that our focus on Iraq is going to mean that there will be focus on Syria. That also drives them together.

One of the reasons—there was a question before about how this has come up in the press. The Syrian press is so animated by this debate and angry about this debate. Angry about the possibility of this act passing. I think that's because they fear that this is one of many steps that the United States is taking, indicating after Iraq, Syria is next. Now that doesn't have to be the case.

I think what this case says, most forcefully, is that you can't have it both ways. We will not tolerate double dealing. You can't work with us on this terrorist group and work against us on that terrorist group.

In terms of Syrian reputation for sticking to its deals, the Israelis were the ones who articulated this, and they maintained—and they're right there on the front line, so I take them at their word. They are not known to be close friends with the Syrians. So if they are saying it, I believe it. That when it came to the Syrians, if you made a deal, you could take them at their word and they would stick to it.

Now it's also important to note that was referring to Syria under the regime of Hafez Assad. We don't know what exactly would be the case—if it would be similar or very different under Bashar. Bashar has continued to disappoint whether it comes to internal reforms; developing a very, very close personal and dangerous relationship with Nasrallah; allowing and facilitating an increase in terrorist activity by Hezbollah and all these other groups.

The fact, for example, that Syria is now directly providing arms to Hezbollah is a huge, huge break in tradition.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much. The Chair will now take his time, and I mean, me. Let me mention, first of all, Mr. Ambassador, your conversations with the Maronite leader reflect the conversations I've had in Lebanon. I have taken two trips to Lebanon and met with leaders from every group, and your conversation with the Maronite exactly reflects that, and I will say that once the official conversations are over, you just hear people saying they all remember the massive bloodshed that was going there 25 years ago. They do not take that lightly.

When we talk about the existence of somebody strong arming somebody or assassinating somebody off in the side, these people remember when people were dying by the hundreds on a daily basis. They have every reason to be concerned that Lebanon not evolve back into that.

Now with that said, let me suggest that I am not supportive of Syria continuing an occupation of Lebanon. I mean, I don't believe in that, but just be aware there are so many forces at play in Lebanon. I would hope that as this works out with Syria's withdrawal, as it did with the Israeli withdrawal, that it's being done in a way

that does not reignite that cycle that was going where so many hundreds of people were killed.

I was in the White House when Ronald Reagan sent the Marines into Lebanon. That was one of my saddest days when those Marines were blown to hell. I remember the first name on that list, Sergeant David Battle. The first name on the list of Marines who gave their lives in Lebanon.

That man happened to be one of my family's best friends. My brother grew up with him. I grew up with him. He is gone and he left two children. That was as a result of the United States being in the mist of that conflict and we could not end it.

I am just going to say it. The Syrians went in and that conflict eventually ended. Now there are undercurrents of repression that no American can except, but let's not expect the Syrians to listen to us when are saying other things when we don't give them credit where credit is due.

Now in terms of the actual purpose of this bill, which is the other half of the bill is aimed at, not the occupation of Lebanon, but the support of terrorism. I recently had a visitor from the Syrian government come to my office to visit me. The purpose was to complain about this piece of legislation. I will just have to say they visited me because I have a reputation of when Israel does something—I don't hesitate to condemn those acts when Israel does something.

Thus, I have some kind of acceptability in terms of people understanding that I try to be honest about the issues in the Middle East because there are a lot of people who can't ever say Israel has done something wrong. But with that said, the Syrian leader who came to see me was complaining about this, and I just said, well, guess what, Syria is supporting terrorist organizations that kill women and children. There is no excuse for that. So if you want this legislation—I will go on record right now for the Syrian friends who are watching, if you don't want this legislation to go forward, have your government make an official statement condemning terrorism and suggesting that Syria will no longer support any organization that targets women and children and elderly people and noncombatants.

Now if Syria wants to continue supporting organizations that attack soldiers, well, that's war. They are at war with Israel. That's not terrorism. But I will tell you that when people explode bombs and senior citizens are murdered or children are killed or women and children are killed, there is no accepting that. There is no ignoring it. Syria is involved in that type of support for organizations that are doing that.

If the Syrians don't want this legislation to go forward, they can easily stop it tomorrow by having a press conference, and announcing that there will no longer be any support in any place in Syria for an organization that does those deeds. So I hope someone is listening, and I'm trying to call it as I see it.

With that said, let me suggest also that there are lot of people who are targeting women and children in the Middle East. Again, to be fair about it, Syria has to expect this act from the United States, but other people should start really examining their soul and trying to find out if there are other countries and other organi-

zations that are killing women and children to achieve their ends as well. That's my definition of terrorism.

Eliot, I want to commend you. As I say, I am somewhat supportive of your legislation; although, I maybe disagree with the analysis of Lebanon. I do want them out of Lebanon because I believe all people have a right to self-determination. The Lebanese people do as well. I will be very happy to have any of you make a final comment—a 1-minute comment on what I just said or anything you else you heard in the hearing. We will just go straight on down, and we are going give you the last word.

Mr. GABRIEL. Mr. Chairman, thank you and the Committee Members for all this time. I would like to commend Representative Engel for this bill because as Mr. Berman rightly put, if it wasn't for this bill, we wouldn't have this debate. I mean that sincerely that it has helped the debate in the foreign policy arena that we need to have right now. I hope that we can find a common way forward, but I thank the Committee for hearing us out.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you. Mr. Levitt?

Mr. LEVITT. Thank you. I similarly thank the Committee for having this hearing. I think it is very important to discuss these issues in the kind of detail we discussed today.

I think it is also important to mention that I don't think any of us wanted to have to have a debate over this particular bill. Nothing would make any of us happier than to have a free Lebanon and to have Syria engage in activity other than state-sponsorship of terrorism.

For the most part, this is not out of anger, but out of concern. We would prefer to have purely diplomatic relations with Syria. We would prefer to be able to focus on nothing other than business relations, but the bottom line is the business relations that we have with Syria are not even tertiary to the primary national interest concerns regarding the war on terrorism, liberating Iraq, the Middle East peace process, et cetera. These are what are at the front of the agenda right now and with good reason. People's lives are at stake, and you just can't play with that.

What we have been doing to date has been allowing Syria to kind of ride the wave of the status quo relationship because they know we're not going to take them to task. We've become background noise and it's to our detriment, not only with Bashar Assad, but with Saddam Hussien, with Arafat and with others in the region who understand the language of background noise. Thank you.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Say what you mean and mean what you say. Mr. Reinsch?

Mr. REINSCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As an American who is not of Lebanese descent, and is not an expert on either the country or the region, this has been a very enlightening debate for me. I commend the Committee for having the kind of dialogue or encouraging the kind of dialogue that has taken place. I think it's been thought-provoking.

Our view, as I said in my testimony, is focused less on the specifics of the region than on the fact that in our experience—we've observed a lot of these—the kinds of things the bill proposes simply don't work and they do have costs.

We think in this particular case, as I said, that there is an argument to be made as the Secretary of State has made, and as the President has made, for leaving them with flexibility to address a complex, fast-moving situation in the Middle East; and to use the tools they already have available, which include sanctions, rather than put them in a very narrow strait jacket as far as sanctions are concerned, as this bill would do. So despite the enlightening debate, we continue to oppose the bill, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Now we are going to give the last word to Mr. Saadi, but before I give it to him, just remember all those compliments about the Committee really are to Ben Gilman, who has done a terrific job here over the years, and I just want to reiterate that. Mr. Saadi?

Mr. SAADI. Mr. Chairman, two points. As far as sanctions are concerned, the good thing about the bill is that it provides a road map for Syria to have the sanctions removed. But more importantly, Mr. Chairman, I have to take issue, respectfully, with your characterization of the Lebanese bloodshed. It seems you and I have a completely different understanding of the history of the conflict.

The bloodshed was rarely between Lebanese-Lebanese. It started out as Palestinian-Lebanese, then Palestinian-Syrian against Lebanese. Then Iranian and extremist fundamentalists against Lebanese and then finally, Syrian-Lebanese war. Then when Syria took all of Lebanon, sure, the bloodshed stopped.

One very important point, in Lebanon today, it's much different than in Yugoslavia or Bosnia-Herzegovina. In Lebanon today, a Lebanese, generally speaking, can go anywhere—north, south, east, west and is not afraid of having to be attacked by his fellow Lebanese. If the war was so bad among Lebanese, with so much bloodshed, how could that be true today? Thank you.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Point well made. Now I said you would have the last word, but I think Mr. Engel has something he needs to say. The Chair is going to use its prerogative to take that back, and Mr. Engel has the last word.

Mr. ENGEL. I thank my friend, and I thank him for his courtesies.

I just wanted to point out in the other body, the Senate, we have a bipartisan companion bill sponsored by Senators Boxer and Santorum.

The Chairman mentioned the Marines in Lebanon, and I couldn't agree more with what he said. I just wanted to read a letter that was sent to Majority Leader Armev and myself by a mother of one the young men, our Marines, who was killed in Lebanon.

This is what she writes. It's Mrs. Judith Young from Morristown, New Jersey. She writes,

“Dear Congressman Armev/Dear Congressman Engel: I am writing to express my support for H.R. 4483, the Syrian Accountability Act of 2002. When a suicide bomber drove a truck laden with 12,000 pounds of explosives into the Marine barracks, my son, Sergeant Jeffrey D. Young, USMC, was one of the 241 servicemen killed on October 23, 1983.

“Hezbollah claimed responsibility. Today, Hezbollah, one of several terrorist groups harbored and support by Syria remains

one of the most dangerous terrorist groups in the world. Although Syria is prominently placed on the State Department's terrorism list, it is subject to fewer U.S. sanctions than any other country identified as a state-sponsor of terrorism.

"President Bush warned countries to make a decision on terrorism, either you are with us or you are with the terrorists. And Syria is not with the United States. I urge you to support H.R. 4483, and hold Syria accountable for their terrorist activities. I also deplore the abduction, detention, and transfer of Lebanese citizens to Syria without disclosing their fate and whereabouts as a blatant violation to international convention on Civil and Political Rights of 1966.

"I have personally met the parents of a 17-year old boy taken by the Syrians in Lebanon 12 years ago. They have no idea when they will ever see him again. Yours truly, Judith C. Young."

I think that I will let Mrs. Young's words be the last words. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. By unanimous consent, the record will remain open for the insertion of materials at request of the Members of this Subcommittee. It will remain open for 2 weeks and with that said, I would like to thank the witnesses. This has been a very, very thought-provoking hearing and a very good debate for all of us and for the people of our country.

This hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:42 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DAVID SATTERFIELD, DEPUTY ASSISTANT
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

Thank you, Chairman Gilman. And thank you to all the Members of the Committee for giving me this opportunity to discuss our bilateral relationship with Syria and the potential effect on this relationship of HR 4483.

Mr. Chairman, let me begin by stating that we are in full agreement with the goals underlying this bill. No one is more concerned about Syria's support for terrorism than the President. These concerns are a matter of record and are why Syria has long been designated as a state sponsor of terrorism and subject to numerous sanctions. We also put a high priority on ending Syria's illicit trade with Iraq, putting a stop to proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, particularly by state sponsors of terrorism, and seeing an independent Lebanon that is free of all foreign forces, including Syrian, and exercises sovereignty over its territory.

Of concern to our discussions today is what approach most effectively advances the wide range of U.S. interests in the region, including a very important priority—the security of our close friend, Israel. The President and the Secretary are in the middle of an extremely sensitive effort to stop the Arab-Israeli violence, avoid the outbreak of regional war, and help the parties back on a path to comprehensive peace. If our efforts on both comprehensive peace and the war against terrorism are to succeed, the President and the Secretary will need flexibility to determine what combination of incentives and disincentives will maximize cooperation and advance our goals. This is equally true as we look ahead to the range of options before us on Iraq.

For this reason, we do not believe this is the right time for legislative initiatives that could complicate or even undermine our efforts. The imposition of new sanctions on Syria would severely limit our ability to address a range of important issues directly with the highest levels of the Syrian government. It would also render more difficult our efforts to change Syrian behavior and avoid a dangerous escalation of violence in the region. Of particular importance is our ability to deliver clear messages to the Syrian leadership in order to avert further escalation along the Blue Line between Israel and Lebanon.

In addition, the President has taken note of Syria's cooperation in our struggle against al-Qaida. Syria's cooperation in this regard has been substantial and has helped save American lives. Such cooperation is very much in the U.S. interest and requires high-level, sustained engagement with the Syrian government. At the same time, the President and the Secretary, most recently during the latter's visit to Damascus last April, have made clear that more is expected of Syria, and that Syria's support and safe haven for other terrorist groups must end. The Secretary will reiterate this message in his meeting with the Syrian Foreign Minister next week in New York.

For the moment, we believe that carefully calibrated engagement with Syria, combined with the very tough sanctions already in place, will be more effective to advance our dealing with the threat from Iraq. While we are in full agreement with the underlying goals of HR 4483, we do not believe that the proposed bill provides the best mechanism for achieving these goals. Imposing the new sanctions regime envisioned by the Syria Accountability Act would limit our options and restrict our ability to deal with a difficult and dangerous regional situation at a particularly critical time. For this reason, we ask that your Committee work to strengthen the hand of the President and Secretary as they seek to lead the region away from violence and towards peace, and not move forward on this bill at this time.

Thank you very much. I'd be please to take your questions.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DARRELL E. ISSA, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I will be brief. I'm glad this bill has been brought before the Committee so we can begin to address some of confusion surrounding it. There are a whole host of popular misconceptions surrounding this bill. The biggest of these is that this bill will somehow give the President the "tools" he supposedly needs to take a hard line against Syria. This idea is ridiculous. The President already has the authority to impose sanctions on Syria under the Export Administration Act and the Foreign Assistance Act. Indeed, most of the sanctions that are written into this bill are already in place because Syria is classified by our government as a state sponsor of terror. This bill would *require* the President to act on new sanctions—it wouldn't just *allow* him, or give him the "tools" to act as some have erroneously claimed.

The simple fact is that our relationship with Syria is complicated—it will not be improved, either in the long run or short run, by a sweeping sanctions regime. On the one hand Syria has provided us with some critical intelligence on Al-Qaeda and has fully supported our efforts in Afghanistan. On the other hand Syria has failed to stop supporting anti-Israeli terrorist groups like Hezbollah, the PFLP, and Hamas. On the one hand, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has expressed interest in opening up, joining the WTO, and cooperating with the United States. On the other hand, Syria continues to import Iraqi oil outside the UN oil-for-food program.

There seem to be two Syria's—one that is cooperative and strategically important, one that is belligerent and unhelpful. This relationship obviously requires balanced and careful diplomacy with use of both the carrot and stick: it requires flexibility. This sanctions bill would completely eliminate the flexibility the President already has to deal with Syria. It would force the President to sanction Syria even more than it already is. It would force the President to downgrade diplomatic relations, destroying the progress we have made with the young Syrian President, and eliminating the minimal leverage we already have over Syria. There is no reason for Congress to weigh in with a heavy-handed policy change at this time, particularly as we prepare for action on Iraq.

I will be the first to say that many of Syria's actions are deeply troubling. These should not be ignored. However, there is an on-going dialogue between Congress and the Syrian leadership that has opened up over the past year, and there is a standing invitation from President Assad to all Members who are interested in continuing this dialogue. I would urge my colleagues to take the time, travel to the region, hear from our Ambassador, our diplomats, and the Syrian leadership, and then draw your own conclusions on what direction we should take. We can always bring this bill to the floor in the future if conditions warrant it. But we should not force it through Congress now, thereby tying the President's hands during this critical time in the war on terror and pending action on Iraq.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ROBERT WEXLER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF FLORIDA

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for holding this important hearing concerning the Syria Accountability Act. Today I join my colleagues in expressing my profound concern for Syria's continued support of terror, occupation of Lebanon, development of weapons of mass destruction and enhanced strategic relationship with Iraq. These developments threaten to undermine the security of the United States, our success in the war against terror and the stability of the entire Middle East. It is in this regard that I believe the Congress must take immediate steps to address Syria's violations of international law by supporting and passing the Syria Accountability Act.

Despite hope that Bashar Assad would bring forth a new policy of moderation following the death of his father, he has only increased Syria's contempt for the United States, hostility toward Israel and support of international terror. Not only has Bashar Assad continued the oppressive policies of his late father, but he has demonstrated an insatiable propensity for feeding the flames of incitement and terror that threaten to engulf the entire Middle East.

Even though Syria remains listed by the State Department as an official state sponsor of terror, fewer U.S. sanctions apply to Syria than any other country on this list. This is unconscionable, considering that Syria supports or harbors more terrorist organizations than any other country in the world, including Hizbollah—

dubbed the “A-Team of Terrorism” by Assistant Secretary of State Armitage— Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

For the past several years, Syria has allowed these organizations to operate freely and coordinate terrorist attacks, including suicide bombings, on Israel from their headquarters in Syria as well as Lebanese areas under their control. The most consistent and disconcerting Syrian alliance with terror has been its long-standing partnership with Hizbollah, an organization—like Al Qaeda, with cells throughout the world—responsible for the tragic bombing of the U.S. embassy and marine barracks in Beirut in 1983, the heinous attacks on the Israeli embassy and Jewish community center in Argentina in 1992 and 1994, and decades of aggression and terror against Israel.

Syria’s continued military rule over Lebanon allows it to control Hizbollah’s policies, which have recently included the unprovoked kidnaping of Israeli soldiers, and Katushya and mortar attacks aimed at increasing tension on Israel’s northern border and precipitating further conflict in the Middle East.

Syria’s direct role in encouraging these provocations clearly demonstrates Bashar Assad’s contempt for the Middle East peace process and his intention to use Hizbollah as a proxy for escalating conflict with Israel, despite Israel’s recent withdrawal from Lebanon, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 425.

In addition to supporting Hizbollah, reports have recently emerged concerning Syria’s willingness to cooperate with Al Qaeda and provide a safe-haven for 150–200 Bin Laden operatives in Lebanon. This disturbing development—in conjunction with recent reports concerning Syria’s flourishing trade and military relationship with Iraq—clearly indicate that Syria is working against American interests in the Middle East.

Syria’s complicity in terror and support for militant groups has made it one of the most dangerous threats to America’s security and defense. It is in this regard that the United States must impose a stricter sanctions regime against Syria and demand an unequivocal end to its support of terror, development of weapons of mass destruction and partnership with Saddam Hussein. Additionally, Syria must withdraw from Lebanon and recognize its sovereignty as an independent nation, in compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 520.

Mr. Chairman, if the United States is to succeed in its war against terror and efforts to eradicate Al Qaeda, we cannot afford to ignore Syria, whose policies—like those of Iraq—threaten to undermine American objectives in the region and greatly endanger our prospects for achieving security and peace.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JOSEPH CROWLEY, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to address this hearing on the Syria Accountability Act, H.R.4483. I am proud to be a co-sponsor of this important legislation, which makes it clear to the regime in Damascus that it must take steps to rejoin the community of responsible nations or suffer consequences.

As far as I am concerned, Syria is a rogue regime.

At the same time as it sits on the United Nations Security Council, it violates such a wide range of legally binding Security Council resolutions that it cannot be considered a responsible member of the community of nations.

- In violation of Security Council resolution 661 and the many other Security Council resolutions imposing economic sanctions on Iraq, Syria imports oil from Iraq, providing Saddam Hussein with millions of dollars a year that he can use to purchase weapons and oppress the Iraqi population.
- In violation of Security Council resolution 1373 and other resolutions and treaties requiring states to cease their support for terrorism, Syria has long permitted international terrorists to use Syria and Lebanon as bases of operations for years.
- The Syrian government facilitates violent attacks against its neighbors through its support for Palestinian extremists, Lebanese Hezbollah, and Kurdish guerilla groups.
- In violation of Security Council resolution 520, which calls on all states to respect the sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon, Syrian troops have occupied Lebanon for more than 25 years, trampling on the sovereignty of the Lebanese people and stifling opportunities for economic reconstruction and political reconciliation.

- In violation of international agreements on chemical and biological weapons and all international norms, Syria continues to develop weapons of mass destruction and the ballistic missiles needed to deliver them.

If the Syrian regime wants to continue these activities and remain isolated from the international community, the United States should assist it in this effort by treating it like the outlaw that it is. Putting an end to economic and commercial cooperation with Syria, whose dismal economy needs all the help it can get, may give President Assad an incentive to contribute to international peace and security rather than undermine it.

Mr. Chairman, it is critical that Congress send President Assad a clear message that the Syrian government needs to change its stripes. The Syria Accountability Act sends just such a message, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Thank you.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SHELLEY BERKLEY, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEVADA

Thank you Mr. Chairman for holding this important hearing. Welcome, Congressmen Arney and Engel, I look forward to hearing your testimony.

In his State of the Union address on January 29, 2002, President Bush declared that the United States will “Work closely with our coalition to deny terrorists and their state sponsors the materials, technology, and expertise to make and deliver weapons of mass destruction.”

The Syria Accountability Act is an important 1st step in dealing with those rogue states that would sponsor terrorism—and I am proud to co-sponsor this legislation (HR 4483).

My view with respect to Syria is unequivocal. It is a terrorist state that has been allowed to support and export terrorism for far too long. And it is time to address Syria’s egregious and unacceptable behavior.

Mr. Chairman, the facts speak for themselves: Syria is a leading sponsor of international terrorism. In fact, Hezbollah, Hamas, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and seven other terrorist groups are headquartered in Damascus.

Syria continues to occupy Lebanon, from which Syrian-supported terrorists (especially Hezbollah) have continued to launch attacks on Israel’s northern border with impunity.

As Syria continues to make progress toward the development of chemical and biological weapons, it is essential that we deal with this rogue state before it decides to strike Israel and its other neighbors with such weapons of mass destruction.

This issue could not be more timely, in light of our country’s current debate about Iraq and its weapons of mass destruction. We must not let the Iraq debate distract us from those other terrorist regimes—like Syria—that pose an imminent threat to international security.

Mr. Chairman, it is time to act. We have witnessed enough terrorism in the Middle-East. As we contemplate the future of Iraq, let us remember that Saddam Hussein and Syria support their terrorist aims partly with an illegal oil pipeline running between Syria and Iraq. This illegal trade, in violation of UN sanctions, provides each regime with over \$1 billion to fund and support international terrorism.

The Syria Accountability Act will help address these roadblocks to peace by imposing tough new sanctions against Syria until the President certifies that Syria has (1) ceased its support for terrorist groups, (2) withdrawn from Lebanon, (3) abandoned its development of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them and (4) complied with UN resolutions concerning its relations with Iraq.

The Syria Accountability Act will help destroy the infrastructure and tools of Syrian-sponsored terrorism, and send a strong message to all rogue states that are involved in or support international terrorism. I urge my colleagues on the Committee to support this important and timely legislation.

AMERICAN TASK FORCE FOR LEBANON
THE MINORITY REPORT

September 10th, 2002
Washington, DC

We the undersigned members of the American Task Force for Lebanon (ATFL), declare the following:

In view of the fact that the US Congress is about to vote on two bills (H.R.4483 and S.2215) introduced this year and calling for the withdrawal of Syria out of Lebanon. And in view of the fact that the executive office of our organization has adopted a negative attitude towards the two bills, known as the “*Syrian Accountability Act of 2002*”, without conducting a referendum within the organization.

In view of the fact that members of ATFL have formed a delegation this past July and visited the Governments of Lebanon and Syria without consulting with the membership on this delicate matter, and in view of the fact that while in Lebanon and Syria, the said delegation issued statements in which it declared its opposition to the “*Syrian Accountability Act*”.

And considering the fact that the said delegation has not taken into consideration the will and the views of many members of ATFL as well as the overwhelming majority of Lebanese-American organizations, with whom it did not consult nor coordinate.

Considering the fact that the ATFL was invited by Congress to testify on September 12th along with other Lebanese-American groups and experts. And exercising our legitimate right to express our views as members of the organization to the general membership of ATFL as well as to the Lebanese-American community, the US Congress and the friends of Lebanon in America.

We hereby, as full members of ATFL, issue this Minority Report regarding the “*Syrian Accountability Act*” so that it could be distributed to Congress the day of the Hearing and released to the public.

The American Task Force for Lebanon ATFL is an American organization which should express the views of its members and seek the enhancement of the interests of the United States and the consolidation of American-Lebanese relationship. It does not operate as an extension of the Lebanese or Syrian Governments.

The ATFL should seek the implementation of US policy towards Terrorism as announced by its Government, and particularly as formulated by the President in the State of the Union Address of 2002. Therefore the ATFL must consider Hizbollah as a Terrorist organization, and therefore commends any policy, which asks Syria to withdraw its support of the said organization and proceed to its disarming. The ATFL must then endorse the “*Syrian Accountability Act*” (SAA) which asks Syria to implement this anti-Terrorist policy, and place sanctions to comply Damascus with these legitimate objectives.

The ATFL should seek the implementation of US policy calling for the withdrawal of Syria’s occupation forces in implementation of UN resolution 520 and in conjunction with American endorsement of the stipulation of withdrawal of Syrian forces as introduced in the Taif agreement. The ATFL must therefore endorse the SAA, which calls on Syria to end its occupation of Lebanon.

The ATFL should seek the implementation of strategic US policy aiming at the eradication of weapons of mass destruction. It therefore must endorse the SAA, which calls on Syria to stop building weapons of mass destruction and long range ballistic systems.

The ATFL must be consistent with the historic stand of the Lebanese American community in support of the US President, the US Congress and both Parties in confronting Terrorism, ending the Syrian occupation of Lebanon and eliminating weapons of mass destruction.

The arguments advanced by members of the executive of ATFL to oppose the legislation are not consistent with ATFL policy nor with the will and aspirations of 1.8 million Americans from Lebanese descent.

The withdrawal of Syria from Lebanon will not lead to chaos in Lebanon, but to the establishment of a balanced and democratic Government, which will be able to protect political freedoms and defend the country’s independence. It is to note that Syria’s occupation of Lebanon was done through creating chaos since it introduced its troops in 1976.

The pull out of Syrian troops from Lebanon will not increase the power of Terrorist organization Hizbollah, but the disarming of all Terrorists. It is to note that all Terror organizations have been introduced to Lebanon and protected by Syria.

Forcing Syria to comply with international peace will not jeopardize the so-called Peace process. But will enable Lebanon to become a real partner for Peace and hence and hence advance stability.

In conclusion, we call on the US Congress to take our Minority Report in consideration as it expresses the views of the signatories, but had a referendum taken place would certainly reflect the position of the majority of ATFL.

And finally as we share our views with you, we deplore the fact, *that members of the ATFL executive have initiated lobbying efforts with a number of Congressional offices to invite them to visit the Baathist regime in Damascus in order to “understand” the Syrian regime’s “interests and views” on the matter.* Such lobbying on be-

half of the ATFL is contrary to the stated objectives of the organization, whose goals are to represent Lebanon's best interests in America and vice versa. It also undermines the aspirations of the ATFL membership which views Syria as an occupier of Lebanon, and therefore must not be defended at the expenses of our mother country Lebanon.

Feel free to contact us for additional information about this matter.

Sincerely

ATFL Members
 Dr. James Moises
 Gus Harb
 Dr. Sami Hage
 Walid Maalouf
 Dr. Tony Rizk
 Tom Harb
 Pierre Bejjani
 Anonymou members (10)
 open . . .

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE LEBANESE INFORMATION CENTER

The Lebanese Information Center (L.I.C.), an American non-profit institute with established chapters nationwide and several hundred members of Americans of Lebanese descent, is dedicated to provide information on Lebanon and the plight of the Lebanese people. The L.I.C. wishes to thank the honorable Chairman and distinguished members of the committee for the opportunity to present the following testimony in support of the Syria Accountability Act.

The current policies adopted by the Syrian regime and its occupation of Lebanon represent a key foreign policy issue to the United States. In this testimony we seek to provide information on:

1. The causes of Syria's occupation of Lebanon.
2. The methods by which this occupation threatens the U.S. national interests and security.
3. The moral implications it has on our perceived values in the region.

We intend to shed more light on the instruments adopted by the Syrian regime for more than thirty years to promote its policies especially the use of terror against enemies of the regime, including the U.S., and the continued use of these instruments by President Bashar Asad even after September 11.

Lastly, we would conclude with an overview of U.S. policy, arguments for change and some recommendations.

THE ASADS' REGIME AND THE BA'ATH PARTY

After being in power for over 31 years, it is often difficult to separate the Asads' regime from Syria the nation. First, it is worth to glance at the totalitarian nature of this regime and its damaging effects on Syria before showing how it has been able to affect its neighbors and the regional stability.

Hafiz Asad seized power in Syria in a coup on November 1970, two years after Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath party did the same in Iraq. Both the Syrian and Iraqi Ba'ath parties are derived from the same ideological branch of the Arab nationalist tree¹. Both regimes are atrocious and share beyond the common ideology many other resemblances, including structural, government methodology, use of terror as instruments of policy, expansionistic claims and a commitment to regional instability as means of securing internal and regional power. In 1970, Asad, then Syria's defense minister, establishing a pattern that was to be repeated on several occasions notably in Lebanon², sent his army to invade Jordan and to fight along the Palestinians in their attempt to seize power from King Hussein. Although he was forced to withdraw his tanks later in face of American pressure, he used the events as a springboard for his final move in his accession to power. His move took place six weeks after the death of Jamal Abdul Nasser, the main figure in Arab politics for over sixteen years, a role Asad inspired to play for the rest of his live.

In what became a staple policy of his regime, Asad wasted no time in demonstrating his readiness to brutally squash any opposition. He hurriedly arrested his opponents and imprisoned the deposed chief of state Salah Jadid for over twenty years in Mezze prison. His methods of long and brutal imprisonment, torture and assassinations of his enemies earned him a constant generous stature among the

ranks of human rights abusers. One example of his Stalinist brutality against his people is the Palmyra incident. On June 27th, 1980 he ordered his brother to send a "special unit" of 60 soldiers to the Palmyra prison where some five hundred political opponents were held, once there the soldiers opened fire in the dormitory slaughtering all the prisoners³. Another example of Asad's bloody trail against Syrians is the one in Aleppo after some demonstration of resistance to his rule in August 1980; scores of males over the age of fourteen were rounded up at random by his army and shot on the spot⁴. And in February 1982, as a further resemblance between the regimes in Syria and Iraq, 12,000 soldiers of Asad's elite forces besieged the city of Hama⁵ in northern Syria and for three weeks reined terror and artillery barrages on its inhabitants. Over 20,000 lives perished, whole districts were razed and a third of the historic city was demolished.

Asad spent the later part of the 80's and 90's consolidating his power in Syria, using the same bloody tactics to overcome Lebanon and to impose his doctrine on both nations while planning his succession by his son Bashar. Hafiz el-Asad role models for most of his career were the Romanian dictator Nicolai Ceausescu and the North Korean dictator Kim Il Sung. Following their example Asad worked on merging his "revolutionary" regime with a monarchy⁶. While events spoiled the Romanian dictator plans and led to his demise, an event that profoundly shook Asad, the North Korean transition was more successful. Upon the death of Hafiz el-Asad in 2000, and against the hopes of many, Bashar inherited the family business. In the beginning Bashar promised changes towards freedom and openness. He quickly returned to his father's ways while relying on the old guards, the National Command of the Ba'th Party. Bashar so far demonstrated remarkable skills in adopting the old methods in abuse of human rights as noted recently in Amnesty International and even by some friends of the regime⁷ and expanding his support to terrorist organizations and has been even more daring and vocal in deepening his ties with the "axis of evil" regimes, Iraq, Iran and North Korea.

To understand the reasons behind the consistency in policy, strategy and tactics from Asad senior to junior and to judge the catastrophic implications of the Asad regime on Syria and its neighbors, one has to look into the period following the collapse of the Soviet Union and detect the pattern of all the missed opportunities for change since then.

The Ba'th regime under both Asad father and son has consistently and violently opposed any opportunity to move toward democracy, human rights, economic development and social progress. The conclusion drawn is that change is very dangerous and could destroy the regime if it became soft or too flexible. An end of conflict with Israel, a move to democracy or an introduction of basic civic freedoms will create an opportunity for the Syrian people to demand reforms and changes that contradict the very existence of any totalitarian regime. The party's elite has staked careers and passions on ideologies that cannot accept or will not survive such a transition. Asad and his upper party echelon, rather than offering a true vision for the advancement of Syria and solve real domestic social and economical problems, have instead fed the masses continuous doses of hatred, anger and rejection of the Western civilization, United States and Israel.

The preservation of the status quo under Bashar has been implemented by revitalizing the same hard line ideologies and causes to tap into the people's passion requiring them to set aside aspirations for a better life, thus accepting their government's oppressive policy's in the name of the struggle against the nations enemies. In a typical application of Asad's doctrine in Syria and to a great extent in Syrian controlled Lebanon, the rhetoric of the "Arab Islamic Struggle" against the Imperialistic plans of the United States and the Expansionist plans of Israel is conveniently used to brutally silence any opposition voices. The "External Enemy", who allegedly wants to humiliate the Arabs, trample their honor and destroy their religion, is always found to be behind any request for reforms. Democracy is said to be not a foundation of peace and prosperity but rather an American Ploy to despoil the Arabs and drain Islam of its meaning, a luxury that could not be afforded in a time of confrontation⁸. The large armed forces are maintained, mainly to secure the regime, at a cost of \$1.2 Billion, more than half the government annual income of \$2.3 Billion while unemployment is over 20% and external debt is soaring at \$22 Billion.

These facts prove the futility of any diplomatic effort to bring the Asad's regime closer to reforms or to peace. Engaging the Syrians in subtle negotiations to convince them to withdraw from Lebanon, make peace with Israel and initiate democratic changes in Syria is the equivalent of convincing a sane man to commit suicide. Syria's Regime *raison d'etre* emanates from the allegedly unavoidable "struggle" against Israel and the United States.

THE OCCUPATION OF LEBANON

Since the establishment of the republic after World War I and its independence in 1943, Lebanon has been a staunch friend of the West and a parliamentary democracy in an otherwise unstable and pro-Soviet Arab world, a cause of real concern to its totalitarian larger neighbor, Syria. Hafiz el-Asad worked feverishly to destroy the Lebanese democracy since the early 70s. He fueled a bloody war between the Palestinians and the Lebanese Christians and then imposed himself as the peacemaker to military occupy the country in 1976. Despite heroic resistance by the Christians for over 15 years, Asad was able to complete his hold on the country in 1990, and forcefully occupy the Christian areas while the world's attention was focused on the crisis in Kuwait. In fact, Asad's occupation of Lebanon greatly resembles Hussein's occupation of Kuwait, but instead of the sudden and highly publicized massive invasion of the Iraqi army, Asad, in a testimony of his brilliant skills, achieved the final chapter of his occupation through deceit, assassinations, guile terror campaigns, subtle military operations and considerable American acquiescence.

Beyond the military presence and the wide intermingling of the Syrian Intelligence in all facets of the Lebanese political and judicial decision making, the Syrian regime has anchored its hegemony through a series of bilateral treaties the most prominent of which are the "Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination" and the "Security Agreement," both signed in 1991. These wide-ranging accords tie Lebanon ever more closely to Syria in all fields—military, political, social, economical educational and cultural—and constitute the backbone of Syria's incremental annexation of Lebanon⁹.

Historically, the rulers in Damascus never reconciled themselves to the emergence of an independent and democratic Lebanese republic in 1943. They have implicitly rejected the sovereignty of Lebanon by refusing to establish official diplomatic relations with Beirut. There has never been an exchange of ambassadors between the two nations. Hafiz el-Asad early on declared that both Syria and Lebanon are one nation one people, often stating: "*it is a mistake for anyone to believe or think that we will ever leave Lebanon . . . to which we are bound by a common history and a common destiny.*"¹⁰

Since the early 70s Lebanon has been the cornerstone in Asad's strategy of being the main figure in Arab politics and for Syria to be the dominant power in the Levant. Based on that premise, Syria's occupation of Lebanon should be considered the vanguard of the totalitarian regime's permanence and its ability to threaten the stability of the region. Control of Lebanon rewards Syria's regime with many strategic advantages. The gains the Syrians derive out of the occupation fall under three main strategies:

1. Fortification of the totalitarian regime:

As was the case of Eastern European satellite states with the Soviet Union, any free and striving democratic society adjacent to the totalitarian regime is considered a natural threat by the dictatorship and induces fear of infiltration of the democratic values to undermine the power structure.

Lebanon's once free and active press, multiple parties, educational diversity and independent judiciary system, were all deemed by the Asad regime as a fertile ground for Syrians nationals opposed to them and therefore freedom in Lebanon had to be squashed. Any voice questioning the validity or the legitimacy of Syria's policy is to be accused of assisting the Zionist enemy and prosecuted as a traitor.

Syrian intelligence agencies headed by the "high commissioner" of Lebanon, General Ghazi Canaan, infiltrate all organizations, being governmental, labor, military, educational, and political and ensure that any whimper of dissent is quickly dealt with.

The judicial system once independent from the state has become a clone of its counterpart in Syria, acts in many cases as the instrument of tyrannical supervision. A recent example of this is the events that occurred on August 7th, 2001 where scores of young men and women, including students and teenagers, suspected of being members of two opposition groups—the Lebanese Forces (LF) and the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM)—were arrested after demonstrations and other peaceful activities calling for the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon. Some of the detainees referred for trial before criminal or military courts were sentenced to prison terms on charges of distributing leaflets "harming the reputation of the Syrian army."¹¹ In another incident Raghida Dargham, an American-Lebanese journalist and UN correspondent for the newspaper al-Hayat, was indicted by the Military Court with "collaboration with the enemy", because of her participation in a conference where Israeli nationals were present. And more recently the courts in Beirut convicted and ordered the shut down of the Murr television network (MTV) on Sep-

tember 4th based on fabricated allegations and in response to the station vocal commentary against Syrian hegemony. When employees of the station and peaceful citizens held candles and parked themselves outside the building in protest, they were attacked and beaten by the security forces.

2. International and Regional Leverage:

In foreign policy, no Lebanese decision is taken without the approval of Syria giving the Asad regime an additional voice in the regional and international arena. Moreover, Lebanon under the Syrian occupation has unwillingly become a breeding ground for terrorist organizations that are controlled by the Syrian regime to undermine stability in the Middle East and give Syria leverage over regional issues. A case in point is the attack staged by Hezbollah on August 29th, 2002 on the Israeli positions in the Shebaa Farms region in Southern Lebanon killing one soldier and injuring two. The attacks prompted the US Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near East Affairs David Satterfield to head to Damascus to discuss the attacks; conveniently at the time Congress was about to debate the Syria Accountability Act. Returning from Syria, Mr. Satterfield was quick to state to a group of Lebanese Christian opposition "the Administration opposes the Syria Accountability Act and has made this clear to the Congress."¹² Nothing was mentioned about Lebanese sovereignty or withdrawal of Syrian troops. No anti-Israeli attacks are staged from Southern Lebanon until the Syrians want to deliver another message to a U.S. envoy in Damascus. This pattern has been repeated on many occasions since the withdrawal of the Israeli army from Southern Lebanon in May 2000. While the State Department has fully expected the Lebanese Army to fill the vacuum and counted on the Lebanese government to be able to do so¹³ the Syrians have prevented the Lebanese from deploying any considerable government forces on the border and consequently allowed Hezbollah to fill the vacuum. Since then and whenever the Syrians felt the need to be included in any Middle East diplomacy, they stir the Lebanese southern border with attacks by their terrorist proxies that prompt immediate visits by our diplomatic officials. This was again evident in April of 2002 when Secretary Collin Powell was visiting the region to defuse the eruption of violence in Israel and did not intend to visit Damascus. Hezbollah promptly staged a series of attacks and Mr. Powell found himself visiting Syria to quiet the Lebanese border.

Violence in the Southern Lebanon has the added benefit to the Syrian regime of projecting an image to the Arab masses as the defender of the Arab cause against Israeli aggression. Irrespective of the fact that the Syrians have not fired a single shot from their border at the Israelis since 1973, Lebanon's occupation provide them with the tool to attack Israel and any possible peace plan through the Lebanese border and via their proxies. This no cost endeavor enables them to claim their leadership role among the Syrians, Arabs and Moslems for championing the resistance against the West, the U.S. and Israel and yet on the other hand still claim deniability through playing the stabilizing role in face of any attempt to hold them accountable for spoiling the peace.

The Syrians have been extremely skilled using their ability to instigate violence in Lebanon to prompt the U.S. to court them as a critical element to any peace negotiation. At the same time, being the real obstacle for any form of peace and working towards the destruction of Israel and the erosion of all U.S. interests in the region, provides them with pretenses that could be fed to the masses in order to maintain their totalitarian regime in Syria, the occupation of Lebanon and an expanded leadership role in the Arab world. It is the ideal situation for a regime that has no intention whatsoever to change. The occupation of Lebanon has provided Asad with the prestige, the tools and the deniability to safely maintain the status quo and while the occupation continues, the Syrians will sure continue indefinitely to hold as a hostage the peace in the Middle East. The need for this is even stronger with Bashar el-Asad than previously with the senior Asad. Lacking the savvy experience of his father and facing ever-increasing burdens of a struggling economy and a steady rise in internal discontent, the young Asad is bound to exploit this strategy in Lebanon even further to strengthen his standing among his people, among Arabs and still show the West his aptitude in detracting any peace negotiations in the region.

3. Economic Exploitation:

Over a million workers from Syria have entered the country and found by choice or force work in Lebanon. For a country such as Lebanon with a total population of 3.8 million and an unemployment rate of 18%, this economic drain is staggering. The Syrian workers send in excess of \$3.8 billion a year in hard currency to their families in Syria.

Standard Syrian products regularly get exported to the Lebanese market. Plastics, shoes, fruit and dairy products are dumped in Lebanon at reduced prices depriving the Lebanese farmers and manufacturers a fair competition and for the Syrian producers, substantial hard currency.

Illegal drug crops in the Beqaa valley and its export to Arab and European countries under the supervision of the Syrian intelligence officers provide the regime with a substantial revenue source.

Smuggling of stolen products, money laundering and racketeering in all lucrative Lebanese enterprises, are all actions that the Syrian elite exploits, with the assistance of their intelligence officers, to pocket huge amounts of money. Examples of this silent partnership are the revenue that Syrians receive from Beirut Airport, Beirut Seaport, Casino of Lebanon and Cellular phone monopoly.

IMPACT ON LEBANON

For every benefit the Syrians receive from Lebanon, the Lebanese pay a heavy price. The total cost for the occupation since 1976 is staggering and the social, economical and demographic cost have been more devastating since 1991 the era of total Syrian hegemony.

Human Rights Abuse:

The U.S. State Department report on the condition of Human Rights in Lebanon in 2001 states that “the right of citizens to change their government remains significantly restricted by the lack of complete government control over parts of the country, shortcomings in the electoral system, and Syrian influence. The 2000 parliamentary elections were flawed and suffered from Syrian government influence. Members of the security forces used excessive force and tortured and abused some detainees. Prison conditions remained poor. Government abuses also included the arbitrary arrest and detention of persons who were critical of government policies”¹³ The Government limits press freedom by continuing to harass, abuse, and detain journalists, forcing other journalists to practice self-censorship. The intelligence agencies under the supervision of Syrian officers continue to restrict radio and television broadcasting in a discriminatory manner especially those run by Christians. The Security and Intelligence “agencies” continue to restrict freedom of assembly and impose limits on freedom of association. Assassination of Christian opposition leaders, arbitrary detentions and being under the constant threat of being accused of treason has devastated most Christians.

Devastated Economy:

The post war economic policies of the pro-Syrian regime in Lebanon have proven disastrous. Under the much-flaunted banner of reconstruction, the government set about borrowing huge amounts of hard currency. Lebanon’s stock exchange was the worst performing market in the Middle East in 1999¹⁵ In a 2000 released ranking of living standards in 218 cities around the world, Beirut finished 158th, lagging well behind the capitals of such impoverished countries as Pakistan, Bolivia, and Ghana¹⁴. From 1990 to 2002 the national debt has grown from \$3.7 billions to \$33 billions and has surpassed the GNP (175%). It takes nearly all the government’s revenues just to service this monster debt. Unfortunately, the greater part of the borrowed money was not used for reconstruction but ended up mostly in the secret bank accounts of a handful of officials closely allied with key figures in the Syrian ruling elite and their Syrian partners.

Syrianization of the Institutions:

Lebanon’s military establishment has been integrated in training, equipment, weapons, and even dress into the ways of the Syrian Armed Forces. Lebanese officers that show signs of patriotism have been purged through demotion or outright expulsion. Those officers who undergo training tours in Syria usually stand a better chance of promotion when they return to Lebanon.

Lebanon’s judiciary system once independent of the state, has over time succumbed to the stifling embrace of Syrianization and is quickly becoming a clone of its counterpart in Syria¹⁶. Judges regularly receive instructions from Syrian intelligence officials. Military courts have in most cases replaced civilian ones where they hold summary trials, reaching quick verdicts, and meting out harsh sentences with little regard for the rights of defendants to obtain fair legal representation as was the case with many peaceful civilians during August 7th, 2001 demonstrations.

In the last twelve years, Lebanon’s advanced and diverse educational curriculum has been subjected to a concentrated Arabization and elimination of Western cultural influence. The Lebanese liberal education, which for decades served as a con-

duit between Middle Eastern and Western culture, is perishing at an accelerated speed.

Since the 19th century, Beirut has served as a main center for free expression, information and ideological dialogues. Hundreds of magazines and newspapers and thousands of books were published and distributed throughout the Middle East. The Syrian regime dictated a "Security Agreement" with Lebanon effectively censoring any information that might be critical of Syria. State security agencies monitor all forms of media and brutal measures are taken whenever the relation with the "Sister Country" is mentioned in any unfavorable manner. The violent shut down of the Murr Television station (MTV) mentioned above and the law suit recently brought against the Lebanese Broadcasting Company (LBC), both mostly owned and run by Christians and both reflecting opinions opposed to the Syrian occupation, are examples of this crack down on free expression.

Erosion of the Christian Population and Islamization of the Country:

Since the 4th century A.D. the Christians of Lebanon had a dominant and powerful role in the Levant. They maintained a good measure of autonomy throughout the Islamic conquests of the 7th century and were able to play an important part in keeping the Western civilization and values vibrant in the Middle East during the 6 centuries of Mamelouks and Ottoman dominations. After World War I, Christians, who represented the majority of Lebanese citizens, built the Republic based on Judeo-Christian values and adopted mostly French laws to govern the society. In 1943, the Christians partnered with their Muslim countrymen and gained independence based on maintaining Lebanon as a unique balance of religious tolerance and where Christians can feel secure of their identity in a Muslim dominated region. In the war years of 1975 to 1990, the Christians at devastating cost, resisted assaults on the state and the Christian areas against Palestinian organizations headed by the PLO and against an assembly of Syrian backed and supported terrorist organization and headed by heavily armed Syrian Army brigades. In addition to tens of thousands of human casualties, the cost of fighting the Palestinians and the Syrians included the loss of 440 churches and monasteries, or one third of the total Christian places of worship in Lebanon. 17 out of 33 dioceses and 29% of the Christian schools were also either damaged or completely destroyed¹⁷. Thus, today more than ever, the Christian presence in Lebanon, that survived for centuries all forms off attacks, is on the verge of extinction.

Prior to the war years, the Christian population accounted for just over 50% of the population of Lebanon. Today this percentage has dropped by 10% due to increased emigration from Syrian tyranny, a high Muslim birth rate and an en masse "naturalization" of foreigners. As is the 1994 law that allowed 300,000 people, two-third of them Muslim Syrians to become Lebanese citizens. The effect of this arbitrary decision on a country of 3.8 million is a serious tilt in the demographic balance and electoral votes a fact that allowed many of the pro-Syrian candidates to win in the 1996 and 2000 elections.

The growing influence of Hezbollah under Syrian sponsorship is at the expense of the Christians' influence and presence. Hezbollah officials never tired of repeating that they want to establish an Islamic Republic in Lebanon. Even the terrorist organization's platform states that "*we do not hide our commitment to the rule of Islam, we call upon the nation to choose an Islamic regime.*" Clearly, left at the mercy of the Syrians and Hezbollah's strategy, pro-Western Christians' influence is quickly dwindling in Lebanon.

THE ASADS' REGIME'S TOOLS OF POLICY

Since the early 70s, the Syrian regime has shown a determined will and mastery in the use of various tools of policy that have created instability in the region and continue to pose a global threat.

The Terror Weapon:

Syria is one of the original countries to be placed on the list of state sponsors of terrorism that was adopted in 1979 pursuant to Section 6 of the Export Administration Act.¹⁸ Even post-September 11, Syria continues to provide safe haven and logistic support to a variety of terrorist groups. Several of these groups maintain a presence in Damascus and terrorist training facilities or forces in Syria. Terrorist groups also have bases in parts of Syrian controlled Lebanon. According to the State Department, six of the twenty-eight terrorist organizations cited in Patterns of Global terrorism 2000 receive some level of sponsorship and support from Syria, and a number of senior terrorist leaders coordinate terrorist activities and reside in Damascus. Namely, Ahmad Jibril's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (FPLP-GC), the Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Abu Musa's Fatah-

the-Intifadah, George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Hamas and Hizballah. Indeed, of the seven states sponsoring terrorism on the State Department's list, Syria rivals Iran for conducting the most frenetic activity in support of terrorism¹⁹.

From the Syrian perspective, the intensive use of the "terror weapon" allows Syria to advance a range of its interests both domestically and internationally: it guarantees the stability and survival of the regime at home; it enables Syria to apply pressure to its enemies in the Arab world; it strengthens the Syrian occupation of Lebanon; it punishes Western countries and achieves political gains from them; and, above all else, it furthers Syria's strategic interests in the conflict with Israel²⁰.

The manner in which the "terror weapon" is used by the Syrian regime, as well as the targets of this weapon, changes from time to time in accordance with political developments and changing pressures on Syria. In the past decade, one can perceive changes with regard to the manner in which the "terror weapon" was used when compared with the 1970s and 1980s. The factors underlying these changes were: the elimination of domestic opposition, the downfall of the Soviet Union, Syria's isolation in the Arab arena, Syria's "off and on" participation in the peace process and its growing need for the United States. All of these factors led the Syrian regime to try and alter its image as a state sponsor of terrorism via tactical changes in the use of the "terror weapon", but without making any strategic concessions concerning its use of terrorism as a weapon for advancing Syrian interests.

In the pan-Arab arena, this tool has been used frequently against Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians in order to impose Syrian hegemony on the components of what the Syrians consider "Greater Syria." Particularly Lebanon experienced the most brutal and inhumane impact of this policy. Assassinations of political and opinion leaders such as President Bashir Gemayel, Kamal Jumblatt, Danny Shamoun, Salim al-Lawzi and recently Ramzi Irany, who have opposed the Syrian occupation, has become a constant in Lebanese life. Noted expansion to the application of this tool is kidnapping, numerous car bombs in civilian areas and indiscriminate bombardment of Christian residential neighborhoods, all made the Syrian goal a reality.

Terror attacks against Western targets carried by the Syrian proxies include the assassination of U.S. Ambassador Francis E. Meloy and Economics Assistant Robert O. Warring in June 1976, the U.S. diplomat William Buckley in March 1984, Malcolm Kerr the president of the American University in Beirut in the same year, the librarian Peter Kilburn in 1986 and U.S. Colonel William Higgins in February of 1988.

Kidnapping was also frequently used as an application of this tool to reach Syria's policy objectives. A number of American educators, activists and journalists were abducted in Lebanon under Syrian supervision. American University president David Dodge and members of the faculty Thomas Sutherland, Frank Reiger, Joseph James Cicippio and David Jacobsen were all victims of this tool. As was the case with Presbyterian minister Benjamin Weir, Terry Anderson of the Associated Press and Jeremy Levin of the American Cable Network who also were kidnapped in 80s. In more than one instance the Syrians, after masterminding the kidnappings, arranged a ceremonial release of the hostages to consequently receive credit and thanks from the U.S.

However, the most devastating attacks were the suicide car bombs and most notably the attack on the U.S. Embassy in Beirut in April of 1983, which left 63 people dead, of whom 17 were Americans and the attack on the Marine compound in Beirut killing 241 American marines. Hezbollah performed these attacks against the background of a mounting Syrian concern over an impending Israeli-Lebanese peace treaty.

The policy of using the terrorist weapon against the U.S. could only have been the fruit of President Asad's personal decision. The senior officials in the intelligence and security agencies whose involvement in terrorist attacks were exposed, headed by Muhammad al-Khouli, are Alawites and are among the hard core of Asad's supporters. Employing the terror weapon served the Syrian's regime political objectives by bringing about the removal of the multinational forces from Beirut, severe damage the West's influence in Lebanon, the undermining of Amin Gemayel's pro-Western regime, the derailment of the Israeli-Lebanese agreement and ultimately the facilitation to impose the Syrian occupation of Lebanon. Without this Syrian interference Lebanon would have been at peace with Israel since 1983.

The Syrian regime has been careful to use terrorist "contractors" and avoid the appearance of direct involvement and in the last 18 years, left-wing Palestinian organizations, once the core element of this tool, were replaced by a combination of Islamic extremist organizations through a joint Syrian-Iranian co-production. The headquarters, training bases, logistical, political and propaganda offices of these or-

ganizations are primary based in Syria or occupied Lebanon. The Iranians on their part offer ideological, military and financial support. In this combination, Hezbollah represent the A-Team²¹ while others including Hamas, the Islamic Jihad and PFLP complement the arsenal and are used where and when appropriate. Until today Hezbollah still acts as the main contractor of the Syrian terror trade. Timely violence in South of Lebanon, the deployment of thousands of missiles in the area, organizing the Karine-A weapons shipment to Palestinian extremists and the increased coordination with “al-Qaeda on logistics and training for terrorist operations, money laundering, weapons smuggling and acquiring forged documents”²² all are evidence that Syrian efforts to use the terrorism weapon have expanded under Bashar el-Asad.

Weapons of Mass Destruction:

Syria today is a prominent and a senior member of the chemical and biological weapons (CBW) club. As early as 1992, the U.S. Defense Department ranked Syria as the sole Muslim state possessing a “chemical systems capability in all critical elements” for chemical weapons. And in recent years, Syria has added biological weapons to its store-weapons with far more strategic value than chemical weapons. Budgeting these weapons is generously available at the expense of the impoverished Syrian people. The measly picture that is drawn for the Syrian army based on its conventional ordnance is misleading. Syria spends between \$1 billion and \$2 billion annually on its ballistic and CB capabilities, an enormous share of the Syrian military budget. Syria now possesses the most formidable CBW capabilities of any Arab state. Its arsenal probably even exceeds that of Iran in quantity and quality²³.

Syria has a combined total of several hundred Scud B, Scud C and SS-21 SRBMs, It is pursuing both solid- and liquid-propellant missile programs and relies extensively on foreign assistance in these endeavors. North Korean and Russian entities have been involved in aiding Syria’s ballistic missile development. All of Syria’s missiles are mobile and can reach much of Israel, Jordan, and Turkey from launch sites well within the country²⁴.

Aid and Support to the “Axis of Evil”:

The Asad regime has in the past few years established strong political, economic and security relations with Saddam Hussein’s regime. Syrian diplomacy has played a major role in strengthening the resolve of many Arab states in rejecting our efforts to militarily remove Saddam Hussein. The Syrian regime is also using a railroad to Iraq—authorized to facilitate the U.N. oil-for-food program—to transport conventional arms including tanks, air defense equipment and surface-to-air missiles as well as “flow-forming machines,” which are used to produce components crucial to the building of nuclear weapons. An illegal oil pipeline running between Syria and Iraq provides Saddam Hussein with \$1.1 billion annually to support the development of his hidden weapons arsenals. Syria also profits from this illegal scheme, making \$1.2 billion annually.

Iran recently transferred hundreds of tons of weapons to Hezbollah via Syria. Members of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards often run the Syrian-sponsored terror training camps in Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley. This year, Asad hosted Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi, head of the judiciary in the Islamic Republic and one of the most prominent anti-Khatami conservatives. Shahroudi is the person most likely to lead the hard-line conservatives in the next presidential elections in Iran.

North Korea and Syria signed an agreement this month on “scientific and technical cooperation,” which could entail collaboration on ballistic missile technology and non-conventional arms. Bashar Asad recently received Kim Yong-Nam, president of North Korea’s Supreme People’s Assembly Presidium to improve cooperation between the two countries in the economic, military, political and cultural fields came at a time when Washington was trying to impose widespread changes on the region in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks. Kim received a rapturous welcome in Damascus and the two sides pledged their determination to further develop cooperation, building on the foundations laid down by the “immortal leaders Hafiz Asad and Kim Il Sung.”²⁵

Obviously, President Bashar el-Asad’s is working hard on improving his cooperation and strengthening his standing in the “evil” camp to confront the “tyrannical policies” of President Bush and to prove Syria’s well earned eligibility for inclusion in the new “Axis of Evil.”

U.S. Policy towards Syria:

Asad's regime, exploiting the United States hopes of bringing Syria and Lebanon to the peace process, was allowed a lot of impunity for its actions in Syria and Lebanon and for its criminal attacks against United States citizens and interests. Also, it cunningly manipulated the US foreign policy makers by giving them some phony signs of cooperation.

In 1990, Hafiz el-Asad ceased the opportunity of the United States desire to form a broad coalition against Iraq. He sent a token force to liberate Kuwait. This seemed enough of a price to allow his army to savagely complete his control of Lebanon. And in return to vague promises of participation in the peace process, he received considerable prestige and recognition from the U.S. presidents and various Secretaries of States in addition to no timely objections to his accelerated program to acquire weapons of mass destruction.

After 9/11, Bashar Asad, feigned cooperation in the war against terror by sharing intelligence information about only those individuals undesirable to the Syrian Alouite regime while hosting herds of leaders and elements of terrorists organizations on the Syrian soil and in Lebanon. The mere interrogation of an operative and some intelligence on al-Qaeda seems enough for some to brand Syria as an ally in the war against terror.

Despite the overwhelming facts that prove that the Syrian regime has no interest in any successful conclusion to any peace process, that it is supporting global terrorism and relentlessly building a huge arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, some US officials are adamantly reluctant from taking a stand against Syria.

The inability of the US foreign policy makers to treat Syria as the rogue nation it really is and the wishful thinking of some who see Syria as a promoter of stability and peace²⁶ in the region have led to over twenty five years of disastrous failures in the Middle East.

The irony is that the evil deeds that are committed by the Syrian regime rival the ones committed by Iran and Iraq combined. Yet the deception skills of the Syrians reward them with a double standard of U.S. policy and a generous dose of appeasement.

U.S. Policy vis-a-vis the Occupation of Lebanon:

Historic ties between Lebanon and the U.S. have seen American business and academic institutions flourish since the 19th century. The Lebanese immigrants established a strong and law abiding entrepreneurial communities throughout the Americas. Until the mid-60s, the economic, personal and political freedom found in Lebanon offered a model for the Arab world that complemented the U.S. strategic interests and hence, Lebanon received much more attention in Washington.

Since the outbreak of the war, the official U.S. position "supported the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon." Although at times the official position included statements in "support of the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon," at no time did any State Department or White House official specifically call on Syria to withdraw from Lebanon.

By 1989, the U.S. had abandoned all efforts to directly assist Lebanon in maintaining any remnants of sovereignty and the official position evolved to support the Saudi-sponsored Ta'if agreement as an "Arab solution for the Lebanese problem." In the last twelve years the "Arab solution" has been transformed into a "Syrian solution" and only articles suitable to Syria were ever executed while others, such as the timely redeployment of Syrian forces, became empty rhetoric. Yet, the U.S. official statements have not gone beyond supporting the implementation of the Ta'if agreement.

In the late 90s, when Syrian non-compliance with Ta'if became obvious, American officials changed their approach and tied the sovereignty and independence of Lebanon to the Arab-Israeli peace process, giving Syria yet another incentive to drag the process for decades to come. In reality, U.S. officials rationalized that since the Lebanese war is over, very little priority should be given further to the small country. In the last two years of the Clinton Administration, and within the increased effort to reach any settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict, Administration officials became even vocal in support of the Syrian occupation, some even "appealing to prominent Lebanese politicians and opinion makers to allow Syrian troops to remain in Lebanon"²⁷ after the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon. Assistant Secretary of State Edward Walker testified in congress in 2000 that the state department "believe that the Lebanese people through their democratic process, can make important decisions about their future relationship with Syria"²⁸ somehow missing the fact that the Lebanese have been under an occupation of a totalitarian regime and

democracy is nonexistent. In June 2000, former Secretary of State Madeline Albright went as far as praising Syria for playing a “constructive role as far as Lebanon is concerned. We hope that they will continue to do so.” U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon, Vincent Battle still continues to date to discourage Christian opposition leaders from taking steps or making statements that would undermine the Syrian occupation. Despite the fact that the policy of appeasing the Syrians has been a complete failure—in seducing the Syrians to the peace process, in maintaining the peace in South Lebanon, in curbing the activities of radical Islamic organization, in improving human rights in Syria and Lebanon and in convincing Bashar to be less totalitarian than his father, the public position of the State Department has remained the same: no public denouncing of the Syrians and let’s continue to engage them in subtle diplomacy.

THE CASE FOR IMMEDIATE CHANGE IN U.S. POLICY

The Legal Argument:

Since September 17, 1982, Syria has been in violation of UN Security Council resolution 520, demanding that “all non-Lebanese forces” leave Lebanon. Syria’s argument that they are in Lebanon by the Lebanese request is refuted in three points:

First, they have entered Lebanon in 1975 illegally without any official request as stated by Hafiz el-Asad himself in a speech on August 20th, 1976: “*Syria and Lebanon, throughout history, were always one country, one people. This is a fact that should be taken into consideration by everybody . . . and it is for this reason that we were obliged to provide weapons and ammunitions and decided to intervene under the name of “the Army for the Liberation of Palestine”; This “army” entered the Lebanon despite everybody without taking any advice from the national parties nor any authorization from anywhere . . .*”

Second, the Syrians have officially been requested to leave by Presidents Elias Sarkis, Amin Gemayel and by General Michel Aoun, at the time when he was the head of the transitional government.

Third, the Ta’if accord, which was agreed to by Syria and supported by the U.S., stipulated “*a redeployment of the Syrian armed forces inside Lebanon within a period of two years, followed by a complete withdrawal*”.

Additionally, the Syrians are in violation of UN resolutions 661, 687 and 986 restricting the purchase of petroleum from Iraq and restricting the sale of conventional weapons and assistance in weapons of mass destruction programs.

The Moral Argument:

President Wilson believed in the moral obligation of the United States and often restated that America’s special mission transcends day-to-day diplomacy and obliges it to serve as a beacon of liberty for the rest of mankind. President Truman’s doctrine in face of totalitarian regimes’ way of life, which “*relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio; fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms,*” proclaimed it should be “*the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressure.*”²⁹ However, the United States, the historic leader of the forces of freedom, seem dedicated in the case of Lebanon, to a negative role of supporting a brutal occupation by a totalitarian regime. In the few incidents in our history where similar position was taken, such as the case of the Hungarian students and workers uprising in 1953 against the Soviets, the sad result is severe damage to our moral standing in the world and discouragement of aspiring people to believe in our American values.

Lebanese in general and Christians in particular have believed in our values of democracy, freedom and human rights for over a hundred years. They have fought for over 26 years, at a great cost, the enemies of our values and freedoms, the same enemies we find ourselves today and after September 11, in a global war against. Is it not the time to regain our moral role and take active and substantial steps to free Lebanon? Is it not timely to publicly declare the evil Syrian totalitarian regime, as our enemy?

The National Interest Argument:

Our best interests are served in a lasting peace in the Middle East. At every major diplomatic turn, Syria stood in the way of America’s efforts for peace. In 1978, Damascus was a key actor in the Arab regional alignment against the Camp David Peace Accord between Israel and Egypt. In 1983, Syria opposed the May 17 Agreement negotiated during the Reagan presidency between Lebanon and Israel. Since 2000, the Syrians have undermined any effort to negotiate a settlement of the Palestinian problem by prompting its terrorist “contractors” to erupt violence.

Attacks by Syrian sponsored terrorism since the early 80s have claimed hundreds of American lives. One could easily make the argument that those attacks and our

lack of proportional response, emboldened Syria and its allies and served as an operational and ideological model for the attacks of September 11.

In defiance of President Bush's proclamation of "either with us or against us" in the war on terror and an offer of amnesty for previous actions, Bashar el-Asad has expanded his support to terrorism and deepened his cooperation with Iraq, Iran and North Korea. Clearly Mr. Asad has chosen the "against us" camp. Appeasement and subtle diplomacy have failed us for the last 26 years. Despite all our efforts to seduce Syria for over two decades, The Asad regime still considers us the enemy and uses the "struggle" to maintain and strengthen its existence.

The occupation of Lebanon provides the Syrian regime with excellent means to prolong this "struggle". By using Lebanon as a facade, the Syrians are able to fend off all direct accusations while threatening our interests and national security. It would only be logical to conclude that the elimination of the threat and the advancement of our strategic interests have to start with ending the occupation of Lebanon.

Time is of The Essence:

Before his death on September 9th, 2001, Ahmad Shah Massoud had been visiting various Western capitals pleading his case of the impending threat to the West by the Taliban and al-Qaeda and begging for any help to the Afghani Northern Alliance in their fight against the Taliban. His warnings were dismissed as unimportant, as no one saw the magnitude of the danger nor liked the involvement in the Afghani internal political quagmire. Two days after his death, the world woke up to the harsh reality of his alarm. No one could know if substantial help to Massoud would have averted the attacks, but one could argue that being late to act in Afghanistan had considerably increased the human losses, time and cost of our later intervention.

Today, many Lebanese are begging for help and warning of the threat that Hezbollah and their Syrian masters are plotting. The cost to free Lebanon would have been considerably less if we had taken actions against the Syrians, Palestinians and Islamic radicals in 1976. After the United States Embassy and the Marine barracks were attacked in 1983 a forceful and decisive response then could possibly have averted the pattern of suicide terrorist attacks that have led to September 11. Again, in 1989, we stood silent and immobile while the Syrian heavy artillery was brutally pounding the free Lebanese civilian areas that fought radical Islamic groups and their Syrian protectors. Our passive attitude through these episodes have demoralized most Lebanese and convinced them of the futility of fighting the Syrians alone. Over 700,000 mostly pro-Western well-educated young Christians, have left the country and thousands are still leaving every month. The influence of radical Islam in education, military and demography is expanding at a formidable pace; Hezbollah is quickly becoming the unstoppable evil, created and nurtured by Iran and Syria. While serving the Syrian goals in the short run, Hezbollah's long time agenda aims at establishing an Iranian-style theocratic state. Lebanon is irreversibly sliding away from being a pro-western nation to becoming a land of intolerance, oppression and misery. The time to act is now before the world loses the lone bastion of democracy in the Arab world.

Today the Syrian regime represents a clear and present threat against the United States and against world peace. Actions against it, if taken promptly, might avoid greater losses and prevent a more dangerous and costly future confrontation. If we allow events to proceed in their chartered course, disillusioned with the effectiveness of appeasement and paralysed by the deception skills of the Syrians, then less and less choices will be available and the price of each becomes considerably higher. In the end when the threat becomes too great, and the diplomatic paralysis erodes most options, the only choice left would be military actions at the ultimate price of human lives.

Experience has reinforced what ideology has taught the Syrian regime—that the political process being external or internal is about winners and losers not about compromise. The hollow rhetoric by Syrian officials proclaiming their interest in better relations with the U.S., their commitment for "fair and comprehensive peace," and in offering token and questionable assistance in our hunt for el-Qaeda, serve only to blur our vision of the creeping danger. The pattern of events since 1970 and until today, unequivocally prove that the Syrian regime considers the United States an enemy. In fact, they never tire from declaring this to the Syrian people and all the Arabs. Bashar Asad on July 16, 2002, during Kim Yong-Nam visit to Damascus stated: "*Bush tyrannical policies, based only on US military supremacy, is spreading a wave of terror in the world, under the pretense of fighting terrorism.*" Then, Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs Faruq Sharaa commenting on Israel attacks in Gaza against Hamas militants said on July 25, 2002, "*Bush policies lack common sense*" and "*Israel attack in Gaza that killed 16 people, including 9 children, is similar to the bloodbaths committed by the United States in Afghanistan.*" The fact that we are

being deceived by their empty gestures is the proof, at least in their eyes, that they are winning and we are losing. Our consistent diplomatic efforts in seducing Damascus to reach a compromise are perceived as signs of weakness.

The reality is, Bashar al-Asad and his Ba'ath party are enemies of the United States. The time for our policy to change and cope with this fact is now. Our just demands should be made clear to Damascus, and our policy should be to pressure the Syrians to meet those demands, our resolve should also be clear to use our might in support of our policy. Our key demand should be a democratic Lebanon free of Syrian occupation. In addition to being the correct moral position, it is the key for advancing our interests in the Middle East and it is the key for eliminating a major element of the Syrian threat to our security.

POLICY OPTIONS

- Clear Statement of Policy outlining our just demands. The Syrian Accountability Act states these demands. Support and passage of the bill will send a clear message to Damascus of where the American people stand.
- Further statements from the Administration officials and most critically, President Bush, should unequivocally inform the Syrians of the perils of their current policy and demand their total withdrawal from Lebanon and the ceasing of their support of terrorism in all its shapes.
- Publicly announcing the inclusion of Syria in the "Axis of Evil." Merely recognizing their relentless efforts to be a senior partner with the other three.
- Refraining from making statements by State department officials in support of the Syrian role in Lebanon. In contrast, our ambassador in Beirut and Washington officials should be vocal in support of pro-democracy efforts and leaders in their opposition of the Syrian rule.
- Lowering the level of diplomatic exchange to deprive the Syrians from the prestige they seek.
- Financially and logistically supporting Lebanese opposition leaders living outside the country and demanding the release of those imprisoned by the occupation.
- Insist on sending the Lebanese Armed Forces to the Lebanese Southern border.
- Press on taking away all weapons in the possession of Hezbollah and other terrorist groups operating in Lebanon.
- Work on reengaging other Arab countries in support of the sovereignty of Lebanon.
- Ceasing any and all forms of aid to Syria and redirecting aid to Lebanon towards social and charitable organizations aiming at relieving the suffering of stranded Lebanese.
- If above options fail, Washington should work on ousting Syria from international forums and work with our allies to reduce their diplomatic and economical ties with Damascus.
- As a last resort, military action should not be ruled out and that should be clear to Syria. Covert or overt operations could be directed at Syria's weapons of mass destruction, its oil pipeline with Iraq, the piles of weapons being sent to Iraq, Damascus airport as the channel of terrorist logistical support, its military forces in Lebanon and the terrorist camps and headquarters in Syria and Lebanon.

CONCLUSION

State Department officials' assumption that peace in the Middle East could not proceed without Syria's support is absolutely correct. Damascus has made this reality its objective for the last thirty years and used various immoral and illegal policy tools to reach this end. Ironically, U.S. diplomacy supporting their occupation of Lebanon has enabled them to succeed.

Peace in the Middle East and the once democratic Lebanon, have been taken hostages by the Syrians. It is this status quo that guarantees the continuity of their totalitarian regime. Our failed efforts to advance peace in the region have been countered with the Asads' successful efforts in strengthening their ability to destabilize the region and in "global" expansion of their threat. The Syrian regime has not, and will not jeopardize its own dictatorship by willingly allowing the "struggle" against us to cease. When asked by his biographer Patrick Seale about a sentence to summon his legacy, Hafiz el-Asad replied: "*the struggle shall go on.*"³⁰

The case is clear that the United States interests and objectives could not be achieved through a policy of tacit and sometimes explicit, approval of the Syrian *modus operandi* and their occupation of Lebanon, but only through a determined and assertive diplomacy based on just demands and a resolve to use our might in support of our policy.

As we nationally debate the means to deal with Saddam's threat, we should not create a double standard for the Asad's threat. They are two sides of the same coin. And while our soldiers are placed ever closer to the threat source, let us not underestimate our ability to direct the winds of change. Our determined will and actions should engulf the main pillar of terrorism in the region—the Asad regime. It is only through a free Lebanon and a democratic Syria that terrorism will abate, stability in the region will be achievable and Peace will prevail.

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF ARCHIE W. DUNHAM, CHAIRMAN, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, CONOCO INC. (AUGUST 29, 2002)

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee:

I appreciate this opportunity to provide written testimony regarding the Syria Accountability Act of 2002 (H.R. 4483) and its potential consequences for the security and economic interests of the United States and our allies.

I would like to begin by thanking the Subcommittee for its efforts over the past year on behalf of the American people and the business community as you have worked tirelessly to ensure our safety and economic viability during this difficult time. On September 11, members of the al Qaeda terrorist network tried to cripple our economy by striking the World Trade Center in the heart of New York's financial district and to destabilize our government by attacking the Pentagon to symbolize the vulnerability of our national defense. Thanks to the dedication of Congress and the Administration, America responded to this aggression with strength, resolve and resilience.

The business community requires a safe environment to pursue opportunities and create jobs during this volatile time. As Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer of Conoco Inc., I am responsible for the safety and well being of thousands of employees working in over 40 countries. Our company fully supports and is grateful for your efforts to root out the scourge of terrorism. We do feel compelled, however, to share our concerns with respect to H.R.4483 which we believe to be flawed.

The primary purpose in submitting this testimony is to share my conviction that the goals of the Syria Accountability Act cannot be achieved by the methods presented in H.R.4483. The objectives of this legislation are unlikely to be achieved because:

- Unilateral sanctions have an abysmal track record for accomplishing their intended goals as they are quickly undermined by foreign companies that replace American trade and investment within the targeted country. American companies and workers always suffer the negative consequences of *unilateral* sanctions.
- At a time when the alleviation of poverty and public diplomacy are understood to be vital tools in the war against terrorism, this proposed legislation would subvert the positive contributions American businessmen and women have traditionally made to raising standards of living throughout the world and serving as visible representatives of America's values and way of life.
- Syria remains an important partner in the quest for a comprehensive Middle East peace and in the effort to identify and eliminate remaining al Qaeda cells. This legislation is counterproductive to the United States' interests by reducing the Syrian government's motivation to assist the U.S. on these vitally important issues.

The most likely outcome of this legislation is that American businesses and workers will be harmed as companies like Conoco Inc. are forced to abandon investment opportunities and ongoing business operations in Syria. The American business community willingly, and with pride, sacrifices to protect our national interests and those of our close allies. We cannot, however, support legislation that punishes U.S. businesses, sacrifices American jobs and jeopardizes important regional relationships with almost no chance of advancing and further protecting U.S. interests.

INEFFECTIVENESS OF UNILATERAL SANCTIONS

In February 1999, the Center for Strategic and International Studies published the results of an eighteen-month study on the effectiveness of unilateral economic sanctions as a tool of foreign policy. The study was conducted with the input of over 150 present and former members of Congress and the Executive Branch, business leaders, and foreign policy experts. The purpose was to determine whether the implementation of sanctions had led to desired modifications of the following countries' policies—Vietnam, Cuba, Iran, China, and Myanmar (Burma). The results of the study were strikingly stark: “comprehensive *unilateral* sanctions did not accomplish their primary foreign policy task in any of the five countries”.¹

The aim of economic sanctions is to coerce the targeted regime into changing its policies or behavior by subjecting it to the consequences of economic decline. In theory, one path to success for such sanctions would be manifested by a progression from domestic discontent due to economic turmoil, to popular unrest and uprisings, to eventual weakening or removal of the targeted regime.

The fallacy of imposing *unilateral* economic sanctions is that their punitive effects are inevitably undermined by foreign companies that increase trade and investment with the targeted country as U.S. firms exit. To address this inherent deficiency of unilateral sanctions, Congress has also attempted to create the effect of multilateral sanctions by passing U.S. laws that have extraterritorial reach. Such laws have proved to be paper tigers as foreign governments usually refuse to recognize their validity.

Given a very poor record on the effectiveness of past unilateral sanctions, my question to the distinguished members of this subcommittee is “What evidence exists that the Syria Accountability Act will succeed where other *unilateral* sanctions policies have failed?” If the legislation under consideration today is passed, nearly 400 American companies currently doing business with Syria will soon be replaced by their foreign competitors with little likelihood of any correspondent benefit to U.S. foreign policy or national security.

¹“Altering U.S. Sanctions Policy: Final Report of the CSIS Project on Unilateral Economic Sanctions,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC: CSIS Press, 1999, pages vii and 16.

PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION IN THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM

In the aftermath of September 11, Americans struggled with questions like “Why do they hate us?” and “How can we ensure that this never happens again?” An examination of the root causes of terrorism has led us to two primary problems that must be solved if we are to ultimately triumph over this great evil.

The first problem is the widespread economic decline of many Middle East countries which gives rise to despair, anger, and deep frustration. While most regions of the developing world have advanced over the past twenty years, the economies of many Middle East countries have declined. Since 1980, the region’s population has doubled while its share of world trade has dropped from 20% to 6% today. Foreign direct investment in the Middle East has shrunk 75% since 1985. Seven of the ten largest Arab nations plus Iran still remain outside the WTO while virtually all major Latin American, Asian, and African economies are members.² These negative trends must be halted to give the people of these countries more hope for jobs, prosperity for their families, and personal advancement, thereby reducing the appeal of extremism.

The second problem is that we have not been effective in communicating America’s values and ideals to the people of the region. This is made more difficult since we have little business presence and few Americans in the region. The crucial nature of American public and commercial diplomacy has been recognized by the President and Congress through a number of new initiatives.

Last November, Charlotte Beers was designated the new Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy, responsible for educating and influencing the attitudes of foreign audiences. More recently, Congress passed the Freedom Promotion Act allocating \$135 million to expand U.S. media programs throughout the Middle East. President Bush created a fully staffed Office of Global Communications to coordinate the Administration’s foreign policy message and supervise the positioning of America’s image abroad.

The Bush Administration and Congress are considering additional initiatives to foster economic, political and educational reform in the Middle East and to promote democracy in the region. These programs have been referred to as a Marshall Plan for the Middle East. The fundamental premise is that engagement, rather than isolation, is more effective at producing desirable changes in public policy.

Although the lack of economic progress in the Middle East combined with gross misunderstandings about the United States are serious problems, I believe America’s businessmen and women abroad can participate in the solution. By continuing or increasing our investments in the Middle East, American companies promote the need for rule of law, American values, sanctity of contracts and the importance of market reforms. American companies contribute significantly to an improved standard of living in countries where they operate through local employment, education and access to healthcare. American businessmen and women establish lifelong friendships with their neighbors and colleagues and in doing so they serve as living “Voices of America” that broadcast our values and culture through hundreds of daily interactions.

The Syria Accountability Act, however well intentioned, will do great harm by depriving the United States of the private sector’s valuable role in the war against terrorism—a role which costs U.S. taxpayers nothing. I’d like to share the story of Conoco’s operations in Syria to illustrate the power of commercial diplomacy and highlight the contributions made to raising the standard of living in Syria and generating goodwill toward the United States.

CONOCO INC. OPERATIONS IN DEIR EZ ZOR, SYRIA (DEZ GAS)

Conoco commenced operation in August 2001 of a \$430 million project designed to capture previously flared natural gas and use it to fuel the generation of electricity and supply Syria’s gas infrastructure. The project was completed two months ahead of schedule and \$30 million under budget due to the extremely high standards adhered to by our employees during contract negotiations and construction.

Conoco’s positive impact upon the expectations of its Syrian employees began during project construction when crews worked over 6 million man-hours with only one lost workday injury. This is truly exceptional safety performance on an industry scale, although our goal is always zero injuries. Our commitment to creating a challenging work environment with ample opportunities for advancement is also evident in Syria where all new employees undergo three months of intensive English language instruction before their technical education begins. Highly advanced training

² Gresser, Edward, “Draining the Swamp: A Middle East Trade Policy to Win the Peace,” Progressive Policy Institute, Washington DC, January 2002.

programs prepared 200 Syrian employees to manage the added responsibilities of operating and maintaining the processing plant.

The DEZ Gas project has also had an extremely positive impact upon Syria. Conoco has contributed greatly to energy conservation and efficiency, as well as emissions reduction and infrastructure modernization, by capturing 175 million cubic feet of gas each day that was previously flared for more than 15 years. This volume of gas recovery, put into more relevant terms, is equivalent to the energy required to power more than 400,000 households in the United States every day.

Other benefits include the near elimination of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) imports as a result of the LPG recovered from the Deir ez Zor plant. Carbon dioxide emissions have been reduced by more than 5.5 million tons per year as gas flaring has ceased and clean burning natural gas has replaced heavy fuel oils for manufacturing and power generation. Syria's natural gas pipeline system has been expanded by 250 kilometers, allowing for greater industrial development and further electrification of rural areas. These important contributions to economic progress have helped raise the standards of living of our employees, their families, and all Syrians who depend on energy resources, thereby mitigating the radicalizing effects of poverty.

An added and especially gratifying benefit of Conoco's presence in Syria is the wonderful new friendships that have served to counteract negative images of American culture and society. Through everyday interactions with their Syrian neighbors and colleagues, I know that our employees challenge stereotypes of the U.S. and create enormous goodwill toward America. Recently, we were involved in the rescue of a four-year-old boy named Ahmed who had fallen 132 feet into a water well near the DEZ Gas facility. Conoco employees used an oversized 'fishing line' to snag Ahmed's pajamas and pull him to safety. After treatment for hypothermia at the Deir ez Zor hospital, he soon recovered and the rescue team gained the friendship of Ahmed's overjoyed family.

It's difficult for me to understand how the Syria Accountability Act can strengthen our national security when its immediate result will be the loss of opportunities like these to gain the goodwill of the Syrian people. Commercial cooperation, which has long been an essential instrument in America's foreign policy arsenal, will be lost if this legislation is passed. The CSIS report emphasizes this point by stating, "policymakers both in the Congress and in the Executive Branch should have greater confidence that U.S. engagement will have more influence on target countries than the sharp curtailment of bilateral interaction."³

SYRIA'S ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

As Congress deliberates the merits of this legislation, it must carefully consider the many national security interests that it will affect. I am extremely concerned that passage of the Syria Accountability Act may negatively impact our ability to defend against the continuing threat of al Qaeda and impair the already fragile chances for peace in the Middle East. Additionally, many throughout the Arab and Muslim world will view this legislation as another example of lack of balance in U.S. foreign policy as they strive to understand why their plight is less recognized.

The Middle East conflict is extraordinarily complex and Syria will have an integral role in any progress toward comprehensive peace. It is for this reason that Secretary of State Powell expressed the Administration's strong opposition to H.R.4483 in letters to Congress saying, "The imposition of new sanctions on Syria would place at risk our ability to address a range of important issues directly with the Syrian government and render more difficult our efforts to change Syrian behavior."⁴ More recently, President Bush reiterated this message to Congress stating, "Imposing the new sanctions regime envisioned by the Syria Accountability Act would limit our options and restrict our ability to deal with a difficult and dangerous regional situation at a particularly critical juncture."⁵

RESPONSE TO CRITICS

Critics question the patriotism of the business community by implying that our pursuit of profits makes us indifferent to the national security threats posed by ter-

³"Altering U.S. Sanctions Policy: Final Report of the CSIS Project on Unilateral Economic Sanctions," Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC: CSIS Press, 1999, pages 17-18.

⁴Secretary of State Colin L. Powell, Letter to Senator Joseph R. Biden regarding the Syria Accountability Act, May 3, 2002.

⁵President George W. Bush, Letter to Congressman Robert I. Wexler regarding Syria's relations with Iraq and the Syria Accountability Act, September 3, 2002.

rorists or those governments who support them. An article written last year in support of the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act summarizes this perspective well. It states: "Opponents of U.S. sanctions include some of America's largest and most successful multinational corporations. They stand to gain billions of dollars in potential trade should they succeed in getting sanctions lifted. Put politely, their arguments emit a faint odor of self-interest." The article ends with the warning that "Lifting sanctions might fatten the bottom line of a few selected U.S. companies, but it would do severe damage to our national security."⁶

These accusations are painful, insulting, and unfounded. I am a former Marine who, like all men and women serving in our military today and those that served before me, was willing to sacrifice my life for my country. My conscience is clear knowing that, without hesitation, I would also sacrifice business profits if I knew the United States would be stronger and safer as a result.

American companies understand that the strength of our balance sheet is dependent upon the strength and security of the United States, which in turn is dependent upon a favorable outcome in the war against terrorism. There is no doubt that our vital national security interests and commercial business interests are aligned.

COST OF ECONOMIC SANCTIONS

The negative impact of sanctioning Syria extends far beyond multinational energy companies. Almost 400 U.S. companies—large and small—conduct business directly with Syria in a wide range of sectors including medical supplies, computers, hotels, energy services, auto manufacturers, electronics, heating/air conditioning, etc. Many other companies benefit indirectly as sub-suppliers to those who conduct business directly with Syria.

The DEZ Gas project illustrates the tremendous multiplier effect one Syrian investment had on U.S. companies and American jobs. This project alone generated \$60 million in additional revenues for over 150 U.S. companies, many of which were small to medium-sized businesses. I urge Congress to consider the costs of this legislation to American businesses, workers, and the economy at this fragile time.

I would like to emphasize that the costs of these sanctions, though significant, would be borne by the business community with gratitude if we believed the security of our families, our companies, and our country would be strengthened as a result. Unfortunately, this legislation requires the sacrifice of jobs and livelihoods for a unilateral sanction that: a) most experts believe will be absolutely ineffective in eliciting a positive change in Syrian behavior; b) eliminates private sector participation in American public diplomacy; and c) dismisses Syria's potential role in resolving the Middle East conflict and eradicating remaining al Qaeda members.

CONCLUSION

Our objection to the Syria Accountability Act is underscored by the need for real solutions that will prevent another terrorist attack on our country. We must stop al Qaeda and other terrorist groups, find a solution to the Middle East conflict, minimize the radicalizing effects of economic stagnation, and build goodwill toward the United States. The Syria Accountability Act will accomplish none of the above. On the contrary, the sanctions prescribed as the means to achieve its goals are counter-productive to its ends and could do much harm to our foreign policy and security interests.

PATRIARCH DISCLAIMS AOUN'S SUPPORT OF U.S. SANCTIONS AGAINST SYRIA

Patriarch Sfeir says the Maronite Church is disinterested in the Syria Accountability Act of the U.S. Congress and wants no harm to befall Syria. "*But we want to be sovereign and independent and make our own decisions instead of having others taking them for us.*"

His statement in the course of an interview with the BBC was seen by the local media as "resetting the course of the church" on an *unflinching determination to terminate Syria's tutelage over Lebanon* without resorting to violence or external assistance.

Obviously rejecting Gen. Aoun's public support to the Accountability Act, *Sfeir said "this is a strictly American affair and the Lebanese should not interfere with U.S. affairs. We want the best of neighborhood relations with Syria."*

⁶Timmerman, Kenneth R. "Q: Should the United States Renew the Iran Libya Sanctions Act?" InsightMag.com, July 2, 2001.

The Accountability Act calls for U.S. political and economic sanctions against President Bashar Assad's regime if it fails to discontinue its support of Hizbullah and withdraw the Syrian army from Lebanon in compliance with U.N. resolution 520. But the patriarch defended the exiled general against a probe the state prosecution has launched to determine whether Aoun had made any contact with Israel or the U.S. Jewish Lobby in the course of his campaign for the Accountability bill.

"If anyone who opens his mouth to speak of the irregularities of the existing regime is promptly accused of treason or being an agent for Israel, that means the climate in our country is unhealthy and incorrect," the patriarch said.

"A country that eliminates opposition is effectively eliminating itself," he said, denouncing the MTV closure as an act with political motives and asserting that the judicial system should not be manipulated for political ends.

Beirut, Updated 26 Sep 02, 12:21

ADDOUM: AOUN, OTHERS COULD FACE CHARGES

Youssef Diab
Daily Star correspondent

Beirut, Sept. 23, 2002 State Prosecutor Adnan Addoum hinted Monday that he may take legal measures against the exiled former army commander, General Michel Aoun.

Addoum instructed the Central Criminal Investigations Department to collect information relating to activities carried out by Aoun and others, both inside Lebanon and abroad, that "harm Lebanon and its sovereignty." The instructions call for opening investigations into such activities and determining responsibility, as well as whether these activities are designated as crimes under Lebanese law.

Judicial sources did not discount the possibility of investigations covering those who had participated in the World Maronite Congress and a rally in Antelias earlier this year.

The sources affirmed that the measures began following information received by the Addoum that they would be in line with the provisions of Lebanese law. These provisions do no exempt any Lebanese from liability, whether the alleged crime or violations are committed on Lebanese soil or abroad.

RUMSFELD ON IRAQ: 'GOAL IS DISARMAMENT'

From CNN.com: <http://www.cnn.com/2002/US/09/21/rumsfeld.cnn/index.html>
23 September 2002

(CNN)—CNN Correspondent Jamie McIntyre talked one-on-one on Saturday with U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in Washington and questioned him on Iraq and the U.S. battle against terrorism.

MCINTYRE: Let me start off with the news from Baghdad today . . .

* * *

MCINTYRE: You were also pressed this week about whether there was anything short of war that Saddam Hussein could do. And you seemed to indicate—well, one thing you suggested was he could leave, perhaps seek asylum somewhere. Is that a practical possibility?

RUMSFELD: Only he would know.

MCINTYRE: Where could he go?

RUMSFELD: Oh, my goodness. I'm sure there are countries that would be delighted to have him. There are countries that have taken Baby Doc Duvalier and Idi Amin Dada and the Ethiopian dictator.

MCINTYRE: Would that be acceptable to the United States if Saddam Hussein was able to leave with perhaps a large sum of money and live comfortably in some other country?

RUMSFELD: The goal of—that is a question for the president, not for me. The goal, in my view, is that Saddam Hussein not be a threat and not have the relationships they do with terrorist states and not threaten their neighbors and not have weapons of mass destruction programs.

If Saddam Hussein decided to take a handful of his family and senior leaders and go away and no longer would Iraq have those weapons and no longer would they

threaten their neighbor, I think that would be a—I personally think that would be a good thing for the world. But whether it's reasonable or not, I have no idea.

MCINTYRE: Let me take you back about...

RUMSFELD: I was being pressed by senators asking me if there's any way that it could happen, and certainly that's one way .

MCINTYRE: Well, let me take you back about 20 years ago. The date, I believe, was December 20th, 1983, you were meeting with Saddam Hussein. Tell me what was going on during this meeting.

RUMSFELD: Well, Iraq was in a battle, war with Iran. And the United States had just had 241 Marines killed. And President Reagan asked me to take a leave of absence from my company and serve as a temporary special envoy, and I traveled throughout the Middle East for a period of months. *And we were trying to get the Syrians to get out of Lebanon and stop killing Americans at the Marine barracks. And among other things, we believed that it would be helpful if Saddam Hussein's Iraq would behave in a way in that region that would be helpful to our goals with respect to Syria and the terrorist threat that existed.* And we decided it was worth having me go in and meet with him.

In that visit, I cautioned him about the use of chemical weapons, as a matter of fact, and discussed a host of other things.

MCINTYRE: You were pressed during the briefings—during the hearings this week by Senator Robert Byrd, D-West Virginia, on the question of whether the U.S., in any way, aided Saddam Hussein in his chemical weapons program. At the time, during the hearings, you said you had no knowledge of it. Have you looked into it since then?

NICK J. RAHALL II
3d DISTRICT, WEST VIRGINIA

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June 11, 2002

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DON'T TIE THE PRESIDENT'S HANDS ON MIDDLE EAST POLICY

BUSH ADMINISTRATION URGES EVEN-HANDED RESPONSE FROM CONGRESS

Dear Colleague:

We wish to share with you the Administration's statement on H.R. 4483, the Syria Accountability Act of 2002 and S. 4693, the Arafat Accountability Act.

According to the State Department,

"While we share the House's concern with the Middle East situation, Congress' consideration of legislation addressing that crisis would be unhelpful at this time. We are working closely with all parties to the conflict and must be perceived as even-handed in our approach. We believe that consideration of these or similar bills will have a negative effect on our down the violence, avoid the outbreak of regional war, and help the parties back to a path to comprehensive peace. If our efforts to secure a lasting peace and to reduce terrorist violence are to succeed, the President and the Secretary must have the greatest possible flexibility to determine what combination of incentives and disincentives will maximize cooperation among the parties."

We urge you to do what is best for America's foreign policy and security interests by not tying the President's hands on sensitive matters of Middle Eastern policy.

Sincerely

Nick J. Rahall
Member of Congress

John D. Dingell
Member of Congress



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

MAY 24 2002

Dear Mr. Rahall,

Thank you for your letter of May 23 expressing your support for our efforts in the Middle East and requesting the Administration's views on two related bills before you: H.R. 4693, the Arafat Accountability Act and H.R. 4483, the Syria Accountability Act. My response to you draws verbatim on the letter the Secretary sent to Senate and House leaders on these same bills.

In particular, H.R. 4693 and S. 2194, the Arafat Accountability Act, would deny a visa to Mr. Arafat, downgrade the PLO Office, restrict travel of the PLO's senior representative in New York, and freeze PLO, PA and Arafat assets in the United States. H.R. 4483 and S. 2215, the Syrian Accountability Act, have as their purpose to halt Syrian support for terrorism, stop Syria's development of weapons of mass destruction, cease its importation of Iraqi oil, and hold Syria accountable for the international security problems its actions have caused. Our comments on these bills are enclosed.

We do not encourage or support the introduction of legislation during this critical period that (1) appears one-sided to the majority of the nations in the Middle East region, (2) places restrictions on the President's actions and thus ties his hands, or (3) will have a negative impact on our ability to gain the support of one or more of the parties to an agreed settlement of the crisis.

While we share the House's concern with the Middle East situation, Congress' consideration of legislation addressing that crisis would be unhelpful at this time. We are working closely with all parties to the conflict and must be perceived as even-handed in our approach. We believe that consideration of these or similar bills will have a negative effect on our

The Honorable
Nick J. Rahall II,
House of Representatives.

-2-

efforts to bring down the violence, avoid the outbreak of regional war, and help the parties back to a path to comprehensive peace. If our efforts to secure a lasting peace and to reduce terrorist violence are to succeed, the President and the Secretary must have the greatest possible flexibility to determine what combination of incentives and disincentives will maximize cooperation among the parties.

I appreciate your effort in this important matter and rely upon your assistance in developing a strategy for peace in this important region.

Sincerely,



Paul Kelly
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs

Enclosure: As stated

Administration Position

S. 2194 (Arafat Accountability Act). S. 2194 would deny a visa to Chairman Arafat, downgrade the PLO Office, restrict travel of the PLO's senior representative in New York, and freeze PLO, PA and Arafat assets in the United States.

We certainly share the Senate's concerns about the Palestinian Authority's failure to end violence and terror, and appreciate the support and confidence that has been expressed for Secretary Powell's efforts. However, we object to the bill's unqualified requirement that the President determine compliance and undertake sanctions when the PA/PLO are found to be in violation of their 1993 Oslo commitments. Presently, the Department submits semi-annual PLO Compliance (PLOCCA) Reports in accordance with Title VIII of Public Law 101-246. The last two PLOCCA Reports assessed Palestinian compliance with their Oslo commitments. Additionally, Section 566 of PL 107-115, the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act, FY 2002, provides that the President "should" submit a report assessing the steps that the PLO or PA has "substantially complied" with these commitments. The hortatory language contained in Section 566 not only provides flexibility in making that determination but provides the President and Secretary the opportunity to attempt to address the Middle East crisis without prejudice. S. 2194 would eliminate that flexibility on the part of the President and the Secretary and would further complicate our efforts to reach a settlement. At this stage, it is very important that the Administration have the maximum flexibility to deal with both sides in the conflict. This legislation would restrict our ability to carry out this vital diplomatic mission, and for this reason, we do not support such as measure at this time.

S. 2215/H.R. 4483 (Syria Accountability Act). S. 2215 and H.R. 4483 have as their purpose to halt Syrian support for terrorism, stop its development of weapons of mass destruction, cease its importation of Iraqi oil, and to hold Syria accountable for the international security problems its actions have caused.

We are in full agreement with the goals underlying this bill. No one is more concerned about Syria's support for terrorism than the President. These concerns are a matter of record and are why Syria is designated as a state sponsor of terrorism and subject to numerous sanctions. We also put a high priority on ending Syria's illicit imports from Iraq, ending proliferation of WMD, particularly to state sponsors of terrorism, and seeing an independent Lebanon that is free of all foreign forces and exercises sovereignty over its territory.

At issue is what approach most effectively serves the wide range of U.S. interests in the region, including a very important priority - security of our close friend, Israel. The President and the Secretary are in the middle of an extremely sensitive effort to bring down the violence, avoid the outbreak of regional war, and help the parties back on a path to comprehensive peace. If our efforts on both comprehensive peace and the war against terrorism are to succeed, the President and the Secretary will need flexibility to determine what combination of incentives and disincentives will maximize cooperation and advance our goals.

For this reason, we do not believe this is the right time for legislative initiatives that could complicate or even undermine our efforts. The imposition of new sanctions on Syria would place at risk our ability to address a range of important issues directly with the Syrian government and render more difficult our efforts to change Syrian behavior and avoid a dangerous escalation. For the moment, we believe that carefully calibrated engagement, combined with the numerous sanctions in place, will be more effective to advance our goals of comprehensive peace, regional security, and containment of Iraq.

In addition, the President has taken note of Syria's cooperation on al-Qaida. Syria's cooperation in this regard has been substantial and has helped save American lives, and for that reason directly serves U.S. interests. At the same time, the President and the Secretary, most recently during his visit to Damascus, have made clear that more is expected of Syria, and that Syria's support and safe haven for terrorist groups must end.

For this reason, we ask that your Committee work to strengthen the hand of the President and Secretary as they seek to lead the region away from violence and towards peace, and not move forward on this bill at this time.

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Haaretz, September 2, 2002

[Lebanonwire](#)

Syria has allowed hundreds of Qaida men to settle in Lebanon

By Ze'ev Schiff

Damascus has allowed some 150-200 Qaida operatives to settle in the Palestinian refugee camp Ein Hilwe near Sidon in Lebanon. The group, including senior commanders, arrived from Afghanistan through Damascus, Iran and directly to Lebanon. These Qaida operatives are responsible, among other things, for the latest outbreak of fighting inside the refugee camp, as part of their effort to take over the camp.

These details and others have lately been gathered by various intelligence services.

Among the new details now known: Mohammed Atta, the leader of the Qaida group that conducted the Sept. 11 airplane suicide attacks on the Twin Towers in New York, flying the first plane into the towers, visited Syria twice or three times. The Syrians did not give that information to the Americans on their own volition.

Osama bin Laden's son, Omar, left Syria together with his mother Nagwa, three weeks before the attack on the Twin Towers, after receiving anonymous instructions to do so. The son returned to Syria after 9-11, and has since visited twice more. Bin Laden's wife and son lived in the Alawite stronghold in Latakia in an arrangement that gave refuge to bin Laden's close relatives. The two are not now in Syria.

Intelligence services have also managed to find detailed information about contacts between one of the leading Hezbollah military figures, Imad Mourghniyeh, and a Qaida operative in Sudan. There is no evidence yet of that relationship developing into continuing ties, but there is no doubt the meeting could not have taken place without Syrian intelligence knowing of it.

Syrian prevarications

Much evidence now shows that before 9-11, Syria was a stomping ground for Qaida operatives, considered a place where they could move around in relative freedom. The country served as transit point for them and Qaida had an infrastructure there. They were able to operate with relatively few of the restrictions that other Arab countries, like Egypt, put on them.

After 9-11, the Syrians initially believed there would be no significant change in the geopolitical developments. Syrian President Bashar Assad told a Lebanese newspaper that "there is no sign that there has been any great change since September 11." He said that "there are ways" to stand up to the military and technological superiority of others. For example, the U.S. "has the most power, the best technology, and the strongest mechanisms, but it has not been able to provide security in its cities because force is not a necessary condition for providing security and stability."

Therefore, said Assad, "the current developments require serious judgment and sticking to basic principles. Following September 11, everything must be examined with better judgment especially when discussing the ramifications of what happened to our region."

Shortly afterward, as American rage grew and the attack on the Taliban in Afghanistan began, the Syrians changed position, and said they were ready for intelligence cooperation with the U.S. on the Qaida issue. But there are now clear indications that it was tactical and only partial cooperation.

Readiness for cooperation mostly came via information about Qaida cells in other countries and not what Qaida representatives were doing in Syria. Important information came from Syria, for example, on Qaida cells in Germany. That apparently is what kept Syria off President George W. Bush's "axis of evil" list.

Most of the Syrian information about Qaida activities in Germany came from the interrogation of a German citizen of Syrian descent, Mohammed Halder Zemer. He was questioned by Syrian intelligence before 9-11, and the Syrians were ready to hand him over to the Germans, who were not interested at the time.

But the Germans changed their minds after 9-11, after the Americans gave them the information provided by the Syrians, which led to information about Qaida operatives in Hamburg and elsewhere in Germany, including information about Mohammed Atta. The Germans then asked the Syrians to extradite Zemer so they could

continue questioning him and put him on trial, but the Syrians refused, and refuse to do so to this day. Meanwhile, Zemer's passport was found in an apartment in Afghanistan that belonged to a senior Qaida commander.

Another link between Qaida and Syria can be found in the arrest in Spain of three Syrians. One says that Mohammed Atta met with another of the three in Spain. The three were found with videotapes of various possible targets in America, and they apparently served as an intelligence gathering cell for Atta before 9-11. One of those arrested, Mohammed Hirel Sak, is an Alawite. Another, Abarash Kallyon, has been identified as a former member of the Islamic Brotherhood in Syria. The third, Abdel Rahman Arnot, has admitted he had links to the commander of the Qaida training camps of western Afghanistan. It is also known that Atta's phone number was found in the apartment of one of the Syrians arrested in Spain.

Meanwhile, the Syrians repeatedly changed their position since 9-11. Nowadays, they appear to be deliberately turning a blind eye to Qaida activity, particularly in Lebanon. A key question so far unanswered is what Atta was doing on his visits to Syria, and whom he met. It's known that he was in Aleppo in northern Syria, but it is not known whom he met. He was in Syria at least twice and possibly three times.

The change in Syrian attitudes can be seen in the permission they gave to Qaida men on the run from Afghanistan to find refuge in Lebanon, which is under control of the Syrian army and intelligence. After the defeat of the Taliban, Qaida began fleeing Afghanistan, heading home. Chechnyans, for example, used Turkey as a way station on their way home. Palestinians, Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian descent, as well as a few Lebanese, headed back to Lebanon. The Syrians arrested some of them for interrogation and it is known that mostly the Qaida have gone to Ein Hilwe.

The Ein Hilwe battles last month were initiated by the Qaida men there, with three of them killed in the fighting. The fight for control over the camp is not over. Meanwhile, the Qaida there, led by commanders from Afghanistan, is establishing a local infrastructure. One bit of intelligence says they are interested in getting material for chemical weapons.

The gun-battle in the refugee camp was angrily condemned by Lebanese. A Nahar editor Jibril Tuwany wrote on August 15, that "what is happening now in Ein Hilwe camp could become a turning point on the way to the establishment of a state within a state, which would mean a siege of Lebanon and Lebanese territory still in control of the state.

"There are fears that Lebanon will become an isolated island because of all the enclaves created by the Palestinian camps from south to north, through the Bekaa and Beirut. The danger is in all these enclaves managing to connect to one another. What happened in Ein Hilwe is a real war ... reminiscent of the war of 1975," Tuwany wrote.

Very little is known about the connection between Qaida and the Hezbollah and there is no certainty those contacts were developed. The first evidence came in testimony by Al Rahman Mohammed, who was arrested after the first attack on the World Trade Center in 1993. He said he knows a Hezbollah official met in 1996 in Sudan with someone later identified as a Qaida representative. The mediator for the meeting was a Sudanese sheikh named Ali Numeini. Bin Laden had extensive activity in the country at the time, as did Iranian intelligence. The intelligence reports say that the initiative for the meeting came from Qaida, whose leaders were impressed by Hezbollah attacks on foreign embassies in Lebanon and Argentina.



Supporters of H.R. 4483 - Syria Accountability Act of 2002

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World Lebanese Organization
Zionist Organization of America
Judith C. Young (mother of U.S. Marine killed in 1983 in Beirut)