

**SYRIA ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEBANESE
SOVEREIGNTY RESTORATION ACT TWO YEARS
LATER: NEXT STEPS FOR U.S. POLICY**

HEARING

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST
AND CENTRAL ASIA

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON
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**SYRIA ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEBANESE SOV-
EREIGNTY RESTORATION ACT TWO YEARS
LATER: NEXT STEPS FOR U.S. POLICY**

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7, 2006

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

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 1:36 p.m. in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (Chairman of the Subcommittee) presiding.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. The Subcommittee will come to order. Thank you very much to all of you for coming today. Not only has the time come to support the Syrian people in their efforts to free themselves from the shackles of tyranny, but the time has come to undertake the necessary steps to prevent an escalation of the Syrian threat. For decades, United States policy toward the Syrian regime was one of contradiction. On one hand Syria had been on the list of state sponsors of terrorism since the inception of that list. However, for the most part construction engagement was the predominant United States approach. That is, until the Syria Accountability and the Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act was enacted into law.

The act would not have been possible without the efforts of my dear friend and colleague from New York, Mr. Eliot Engel, who is before us today, and without the dedication of Tony Hadad and the Lebanese-American Council for Democracy. The Syria Accountability Act demonstrated unanimity of purpose and holding the Syrian regime accountable for behavior that threatens United States national security, or interests and our allies.

So where are we now 2 years after President Bush signed and issued the Executive Order implementing the act? While a very limited number of punitive measures have been imposed under the act, the law has begun to yield some success by deterring investments in this pyorrhea state.

Last year a number of United States and foreign entities reportedly withdrew from Syria. Just last week it was reported that Marathon, the oldest investor in Syrian oil and gas, announced it will leave Syria, citing United States sanctions.

The act has also served as leverage of cooperation from our allies on a range of interests. For example, on March 10 of last year the

European Parliament adopted a resolution underscoring Syria's link to terrorist activities and the need for the E.U. Council to take all necessary steps to curtail them. News reports quoted Hezbollah leaders holding the United States responsible for this European decision. The new United States sanctions policy also had a positive impact on the European Union's position regarding proliferation.

The trade association agreement between the E.U. and Syria was ready for final approval when Britain, Germany, and The Netherlands withdrew their support for the text, insisting that it must contain a pledge from Damascus not to develop weapons of mass destruction.

Perhaps the most significant example of the linkage between the Syria Act and international action occurred in May 2004. Just a day after President Bush announced the imposition of sanctions under the Syria Act, French officials pressed Damascus to give the Lebanese more breathing space with respect to their political decisions. The United States, in turn, further leveraged our new policy to secure the sponsorship of France for a new UN Security Resolution calling for Syria's unconditional withdrawal from all Lebanese territories. This would lead to the passage of the UN Security Council Resolution 1559 on September 2, 2004.

Other resolutions have been adopted by the Security Council stemming from the Hariri assassination and other developments. However, 1559 remains the guidepost for measuring Syria's threat to Lebanese sovereignty and security. In sum, the act, despite limited implementation, has had some positive effects, but much more remains to be done if we are to compel Syria to abandon its destructive policy and its menacing procedures.

Turning to Syria's state sponsorship of Islamic Jihadists, the recent State Department Terrorist Report asserts that Syria remained a facilitation hub for terrorist groups operating in Iraq. The President's 2006 national security strategy underscore that Syria harbors Islamist terrorists at home and sponsors them abroad. Syria also continues to allow Iran to use Damascus as a transshipment point to resupply Hezbollah in Lebanon. Regrettably, the Syrian/Iran alliance extends into other problematic areas such as proliferation.

Recent news reports referred to Syria's development of an innovative chemical warfare program in cooperation with Iran. Unclassified CIA reports to Congress continue to express concern about Syria's chemical weapons program in general.

In congressional testimony last year, Anthony Cordesman from the Center for Strategic and International Studies affirmed that Syria has chemical weapons, including warheads with cluster and arsenal delivery, and seems to be developing biological weapons. There are also increasing concerns about Syria's nuclear pursuits.

In October of last year, the British intelligence report cited that the Syrian Atomic Energy Commission had procured technology that could be used for the production of nuclear weapons.

Syria is where Iran was 10 years ago. We can still prevent the threat from growing. We have a golden opportunity to fully implement our post-9/11 strategy regarding both our approach to Islamist terrorists and proliferation as well as our commitment to spreading freedom and democracy.

We look forward to hearing the views of our witnesses on how the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act can be more effectively applied against the Syrian regime as well as what efforts we must engage in both unilaterally and multilaterally, both inside Syria as well as in Lebanon. In short, where are we on Syria and Lebanon and where do we go from here?

With that, I would like to turn to the Ranking Member of our Subcommittee, my friend Mr. Ackerman from New York.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Let me start out by thanking the Chair for recognizing me and to commend her for scheduling today's very important hearing.

A few years ago during hearings on the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Act before it became law I characterized the Administration's policy toward Syria as rift and drift. The Administration would suddenly wake up horrified at the various forms of Syrian perfidy and immediately commence intensive diplomatic consultations, pronounce various Syrian commitments and successes, and promptly turn its attention elsewhere.

Two years ago Congress, frustrated by the Administration's inconsistent policy, demanded action by passing the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Act authored by our Chair and Mr. Engel from New York. Yet the President took several months before he imposed any of the sanctions called for in the bill, and even then chose to impose the sanctions that had the least impact on Syria, and then ultimately waived them in certain circumstances.

Only recently have the more serious prohibitions on financial transactions with the Commercial Bank of Syria come into force. Madam Chair, I cannot identify what vital national security interest the continued policy of mixed messages serves.

When this Committee last held a hearing on Syria, the list of Syrian offenses was much the same as it is today. The Central Intelligence Agency in its most recent weapons of mass destruction report to Congress again describes Syria's continued efforts to increase its stockpile of chemical weapons, and its attempt to acquire biological weapons. The agency also continues to view Syria's nuclear intentions "with concern."

Syria has continued its open and unrepentant support for Palestinian terrorist groups operating in Damascus. In January of this year, Syria hosted a meeting between Iranian Government officials and the Damascus-based leadership of Hamas, PIJ, the PFLP-GC, and Hezbollah. Despite repeated demands from the Administration, the Asad government refuses to cut ties with these groups, and also refuses to prohibit their operation in and from Syria.

Syria continued to allow terrorists to cross its border into Iraq to kill United States troops, undermining our and Iraqi efforts to bring stability to that nation. Syria has withdrawn its troops from Lebanon, but continued to interfere with Lebanese politics. Syria continues its support for Hezbollah, which last week yet again launched rocket attacks against Israel, and Syrian support for Iran is undiminished.

Iranian President Ahmadinejad traveled to Damascus recently and was warmly received, reinforcing the closeness of these two state sponsors of terror.

In the one area where there has been a significant change, Syria's troops withdrew from Lebanon, a change that was not occasioned by tough talk or sanctions from Washington, but because Bashar overreached, opening the door to international pressure.

The forced extension of President Lahhoud's term and the implication of Syrian Government agents in the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri pushed Asad's government to the brink, and it turns out that Bashar al-Asad is now known to be his own worst enemy.

Meanwhile, as we await the next installment of the United Nations' investigation of the Hariri assassination, Asad has stepped up his repression of civil and human rights activists inside of Syria. The situation in Syria just goes from bad to worse.

Madam Chair, it is time for the President to use all the authority that you, that this Committee, that the full Congress has given him under the Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Act. It is time for the Administration to abandon its policy of rift and drift, and instead bring sustained, consistent, and intense pressure on Syria for as long as it takes to get Syria to stop undermining United States interests throughout the region.

I thank the Chair again for scheduling today's hearing, and look forward to our witnesses, especially our distinguished colleague from New York.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Ackerman.

Mr. Crowley, thank you for being here.

Mr. CROWLEY. Thank you, Madam Chair. Let me thank you as well for holding this important hearing today to review the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act.

When we passed this legislation, which you and my good friend from New York, Mr. Engel, introduced, we all had high hopes for what this new law could bring about for Syria and for Lebanon. We have seen positive signs in Lebanon, the withdrawal of Syrian troops. However, it was a bitter sweet moment since it came at the expense of Prime Minister Hariri's life.

After the Hariri assassination, it was clear that the Syrian presence would no longer be tolerated in Lebanon. Since the Syrian withdrawal, the Lebanese held Parliamentary elections, and the Anti-Syrian Coalition came to power with the majority of 72 seats held by Hariri's son. While this was certainly a step in the right direction, the terrorist organization Hezbollah won 33 seats along with another pro-Syria party.

What I find shocking is that Hezbollah holds an actual seat in the Lebanese cabinet. It is unacceptable for a terrorist organization that actively creates unrest in the Israeli-Lebanese border to be allowed to continue to engage in the Parliament.

Not surprising, Hezbollah continues to refuse to live up to their obligations to disarm the militias who caused the unrest on the border with Israel. Syria, a state sponsor of terrorism since 1979, continues to be a bad actor in the region that provides support to Hezbollah and the unrest they create on the border. They allow for the territory to be used as a base of operations for other terrorist organizations like Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Syria must cease all support of terrorist groups and close their all-terrorist training camps within their borders. If the support of

terrorism were not enough, Syria is also reported to possess an arsenal of biological and chemical weapons, and missile capability to deliver those weapons to their neighbors, including Israel.

After 2 years, we have moved forward in many spots but have taken more steps back in others, but we in Congress must continue to let the Syrians know that our resolve is strong. President Asad must change his country's ways and begin to contribute to the international peace and security rather than undermining it.

I look forward to the testimony from our colleague, Congressman Engel, as well as other expert witnesses today on where they believe we need to go from here, and with that I thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Crowley. And we are so pleased to welcome to give testimony, Congressman Eliot Engel who represents the 17th District in New York. He is the Ranking Member on the House International Relations Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, and serves as Vice Chair of the Democratic Task Force on Homeland Security.

Congressman Engel is the lead sponsor of the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003, which successfully sparked international pressure on Syria to withdraw from Lebanon. He also sponsored a key resolution recognizing Jerusalem as the undivided capital of Israel.

Thank you so much, Congressman Engel, and your full statement will be made a part of the record. Welcome always.

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

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you very much, Madam Chairwoman. Let me first say how strange it seems to sit on this side looking up. It is actually very imposing, and it is very, very, very strange to see my distinguished colleagues facing me. So let me say, Madam Chairwoman, and Ranking Member Ackerman, and Congressman Crowley, thank you for the opportunity to address the Subcommittee today on an issue of a highest importance to me, the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act.

But before I do, Madam Chairwoman, I want to express my personal gratitude to you for your friendship and your partnership with me on this legislation. I deeply appreciate our work together, and while you were very complimentary, I know that the act was successful largely because you are my partner every step of the way and I want to thank you for that.

When I last testified before this panel 4 years ago, the Syria Accountability Act had not yet passed Congress, and the UN Security Council had not yet passed Resolution 1559. Although Israel had withdrawn from Lebanon, Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri had not yet been assassinated, and Syria was still occupying Lebanon.

Today, so much has changed. The Syrian occupation of Lebanon is over, and the UN investigator has implicated the Asad regime in the Hariri murder. As we review the past, we know that American pressure has been effective. Before the Syria Accountability Act the United States had no policy toward Syria. As I said many

times, Damascus was the only country on the State Department's terrorism list with which we had normal diplomatic relations. It made no sense whatsoever.

And if our message to Damascus was muddled, the international communities' was nonexistent, but the policy disarray ended abruptly with the Syria Accountability Act. This law, followed by Security Council Resolution 1559, and the murder of Hariri, made the Syrian occupation of Lebanon untenable. While any one of these forces might not have ended the Syrian occupation, together they became an unstoppable force, and so I believe that this Congress really led the way with the passing of the bill, and I think that we played a very major role in changing the history of the Middle East.

But the Syria Accountability Act had four conditions, only one of which was ending Syria's occupation of Lebanon. Congress also demanded that the Asad regime end support for terrorism, halt development of weapons of mass destruction and stop guerrillas from entering Iraq to do harm to our troops.

Clearly, these other conditions have not been met nor has Syria demonstrated any measurable willingness to clamp down on Hezbollah or to pursue peace talks with Israel.

So have we been successful? Absolutely yes. Syria is out of Lebanon, and has nowhere to turn except, of course, to Iran. But what shall we do now?

First and foremost, I believe that our goals remain the same as when Congress adopted the Syria Accountability Act, ending terror and weapons of mass destruction programs and the flow of guerrillas into Iraq. Yet with Syria's continuing transgressions not all the penalties in the law have been implemented as all of my colleagues have mentioned.

When Secretary Rice testified before this Committee earlier this year, I asked her why the Administration had not carried out all sanctions authorized by the Syria Accountability Act. Secretary Rice then and on other occasions has told me that the Administration wants to implement further sanctions, but wants to do it in conjunction with other nations. She said if that is the way they are implemented, they would be much stronger. She believes that acting collectively would obviously be stronger than moving unilaterally.

Well, that answer was somewhat acceptable when it was first told to me by the Secretary about a year ago. But I thought that the Administration would have moved with other countries by now. Now that a year has passed and no further sanctions have been implemented alone or with other nations the delay, I believe, is no longer acceptable. The time has come to impose the full range of penalties envisioned in the act, and if we don't do it in conjunction with other countries, we should absolutely do it alone right now.

As we move forward, we should keep our eyes on several trends in Syria, Lebanon and the region. I am concerned that the inter-religious in Iraq and the dangerous situation in Iran may spill over the border into Syria and Lebanon.

I think we need to watch Hezbollah very carefully in the coming months. It is high on our list of terrorist groups, and occasionally lobe shells over the border into northern Israel with its mischief.

With Syria's withdrawal, there actually is a debate in Lebanon about whether Hezbollah should disarm, but a debate is not enough. We must demand nothing less than full disarmament, and Lebanese soldiers ought to be deployed in southern Lebanon.

We should also be very careful about taking sides in Lebanon. Lebanon's leaders should know that America wants to support them, but only if they are creating a real democracy without terrorist groups on its soil.

Likewise, I would like to assist the Lebanese military and hope it deploys again throughout the country as the one unified army of Lebanon. But until it presents a plan to become truly professional, we should not provide more than advice and technical assistance.

Finally, I would like again to thank you, Madam Chairwoman, for calling this hearing, and for your participation on this legislation. It has been a pleasure working with you and Ranking Member Ackerman on policy toward the Middle East, and I congratulate both of you on the fine jobs you are doing on the Subcommittee.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Congressman Engel. We appreciate your testimony. I know that we will be working together on some follow-up pieces of legislation. Thank you very much for your testimony today.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you very much.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

I now would like to introduce private panels starting with Theodore Kattouf who joined the Foreign Service in 1972, served as an officer for almost three decades, including stints in Kuwait, Iraq, Yemen, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, as well as positions in the State Department's Near East Bureau and Office of Lebanon, Jordan and Syrian Affairs.

President Clinton nominated Mr. Kattouf as an Ambassador to United Arab Emirates, and was confirmed by the Senate in September 1998. The Ambassador was then nominated by President Bush as an Ambassador to Syria, and confirmed by the Senate in August 2001. In September 2003, he became President and CEO of Amideast.

During his career, Ambassador Kattouf has received the Cobb Award for outstanding advocacy efforts on behalf of U.S. companies abroad, two meritorious honor awards, four senior performance awards, and one Presidential honor award.

We welcome the Ambassador to our dias today.

Also joining us will be Farid Ghadry who comes from a prominent Syrian family that included politicians, public servants, civil servants who served in Syria. He emigrated to the United States in 1975. Mr. Ghadry worked at a subsidiary of EG&G, a Fortune 500 U.S. defense contractor for 2 years before starting his own business in 1983.

Mr. Ghadry sold his business in 1989, and has been involved in many entrepreneurial operations since. In October 2001, Mr. Ghadry co-founded the Reform Party of Syria. Mr. Ghadry hopes to return to Syria one day to rebuild the country on the basis of principles of economic and political reforms that will usher democracy, prosperity, freedom of expression, and human rights in addition to lasting peace with open borders with all of Syria's neighbor countries, including Israel.

Mr. Ghadry is a member of the Committee on the Present Danger, and is presently writing a book on Syria.

We welcome you here today to our Subcommittee.

Dr. Marius Deeb is a professor of Middle East and Islamic Studies at the School of Advanced International Studies of the Johns Hopkins University. He has taught at a number of institutions in the United States and abroad, including the American University in Beirut, Georgetown University, and George Washington University.

He is the author of several books on Arab politics, including Syria's terrorist war on Lebanon, and the peace process.

Dr. Deeb has written over 100 articles, book chapters and book reviews, and is a frequent commentator in the media. He is a member of numerous professional associations, including the Middle East Studies Association, the American Political Science Association, and the Middle East Institute.

Welcome, Dr. Deeb.

We are also joined by Mr. David Schenker who is a senior fellow in Arab politics at the Washington Institute.

Previously he served in the Office of the Secretary of Defense as the Pentagon's top policy aid on the Arab countries of the Levant. In that capacity, he was responsible for advising the Secretary and other senior Pentagon leadership on the military and political affairs of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authorities.

Prior to joining the government, Mr. Schenker was a research fellow at the Washington Institute, focusing on Arab governance issues at a time of leadership transition in the Middle East.

He has authored two books, one with a very interesting title, *Dancing with Saddam: The Strategic Tango of Jordanian-Iraqi Relations*, and the other, *The Palestinian Democracy and Governance: An Appraisal of the Legislative Council*.

He was awarded the Office of the Secretary of Defense medal for exceptional civilian service in 2005.

In short, an excellent array of panelists. Welcome all, and Ambassador, we will begin with you, and we would be pleased to put all of your full statements in the record, and feel free to briefly summarize them.

Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE THEODORE KATTOUF
(FORMER AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO SYRIA), PRESIDENT
AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, AMIDEAST**

Ambassador KATTOUF. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I am pleased and honored to appear before the Subcommittee on Middle East and Central Asia of the House International Relations Committee. The views expressed are mine alone but are based on a 31-year career in the Foreign Service, including three separate tours of duty at the U.S. Embassy in Damascus, culminating with my appointment as Ambassador from the period September 2001 to late August 2003.

The Syrian regime puts survival and stability at the top of its priority list. Everything else is quite secondary. Syria's Ba'athist leadership espouses strongly Arab nationalism and as a corollary resistance to foreign pressure. Having few domestic or foreign pol-

icy accomplishments to point to in recent years, the regime is intent on projecting an image of steadfastness, both in terms of Arab nationalism and vital Syrian interests.

The Syrian leadership would prefer normal and improving relations with the United States and the West, but historically it has proven largely impervious to overt foreign pressures. Indeed, it often presents unilateral United States sanctions as a badge of honor to the larger Arab world.

At a time when many Arabs and Muslims view the United States as hostile to their interests, this strategy has some resonance. Public opinion polls cannot be conducted in Syria. But based on polling done in neighboring countries, however, it is reasonable to assume that most Syrians distrust United States motives and are repelled by the widespread bloodshed and sectarian killing taking place in next door in Iraq.

In brief, many if not most Syrians would welcome a much more open and democratic society and a leadership that, while nationalistic, was not or was far less repressive. But my strong sense is that they also want change to be brought about through their own efforts and managed in a way that prevents sectarian bloodletting and even civil war.

Their fears of instability are well founded. Those from the Alawi sect of Islam dominate the upper echelons of the all-important security and intelligence services that keep the regime in power. Similarly, they hold key commands or other vital positions within the Syrian armed forces. Yet the Alawis compromise no more than 12 percent of the population. The Sunnis, who comprise about 74 percent, are the dominant group. Ironically, the Alawis, a very heterodox offshoot of Shia Islam, were until well into the twentieth century the most downtrodden and impoverished religious group within Syria.

Concerning United States and UN sanctions most Syrians undoubtedly believe that they will bear the consequences of their implementation while the elites go largely unscathed and unfazed by them. For this reason alone, any further sanctions should be to the greatest extent possible focused on malefactors rather than the Syrian population as a whole. They should also not hinder or harm people-to-people programs and relationships.

Syrians have long questioned the fairness of imposing economic or other sanctions on their country at a time when Resolutions 242 and 338 remain unimplemented.

According to accounts available to me, most Syrians accept their government's contention that the Lebanese by and large did not show the proper gratitude and respect for the perceived "sacrifices" Syria made on their behalf for almost 30 years. I hasten to add those are views of Syrians, not mine. Furthermore, they were angered by attacks on and expulsions of Syrian workers in the wake of their army's withdrawal and by continuing anti-Syrian sentiments publicly expressed in some quarters of Lebanon.

Two overriding facts need to be kept in mind in trying to change Syrian behavior. First, unilateral United States sanctions and pressures have limited utility. By far, the most effective measures directed at changing Syrian policy during President Bush's term in office thus far have been the skillful diplomacy that led to passage

of UN Security Council Resolution 1559 calling for Syria's withdrawal at a time when its regime engineered a 3-year extension of President Lahhoud's expiring term.

Following the Hariri assassination, the United States Government, working with France, the Security Council, the European Union, and key Arab states such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, managed to isolate Syria and leave it with no realistic option other than to withdraw its forces. In other words, a broad multilateral approach, clearly targeted and grounded both in international law and consensus, offers the best chance of transforming Syrian behavior.

The second reality concerning Syria is that for the 43 years that the Ba'ath Party has ruled Syria, it has depended on one or another foreign Ba'ath benefactor for financial support because its statist economy has never done very well.

I won't go through the whole litany of where it got this help at, but the last time it had a major benefactor was the illegal oil shipments through the pipeline from Kirkuk to Baniyas. Syria was able to get that oil at \$7 a barrel and sell it for \$28 a barrel on average, on average about 175,000 barrels a day, and as a result they were able to put away a lot of money in their financial reserves, a lot of hard currency, and I believe that to this day they still have reasonably good hard currency reserves.

But right now it is hard to imagine a benefactor with both the intent and the resources who would bolster Syria's fragile economy. So the finances, in my opinion, are Syria's ultimate Achilles' heel.

In terms of getting multilateral support for further sanctions, I do not believe that it will be possible in the absence of a damning report from U.S. Special Investigator Serge Brammertz. If his report ultimately does not present conclusive proof of high-level Syrian complicity in the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri and others in his entourage, then Syria's leaders are likely to shrug it off.

It is questionable if the UN Security Council Resolution 1680 calling on Syria to establish formal diplomatic ties with Lebanon and to agree to jointly demarcate their border will be sufficient to galvanize the international community behind sanctions, even if Syria refuses to implement it.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Kattouf follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE THEODORE KATTOUF (FORMER AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO SYRIA), PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, AMIDEAST

I am pleased and honored to appear before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia of the House International Relations Committee. The views expressed are mine alone but are based on a 31-year career in the Foreign Service, including three separate tours of duty at the U.S. Embassy in Damascus, culminating with my appointment as ambassador from the period September 2001 to late August 2003.

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At a time when many Arabs and Muslims view the U.S. as hostile to their interests, this strategy has some resonance. Public opinion polls cannot normally be conducted in Syria. Based on polling done in neighboring countries, however, it is reasonable to assume that most Syrians distrust U.S. motives and are repelled by the widespread bloodshed and sectarian killings taking place in Iraq.

In brief, many if not most Syrians would welcome a more open and democratic society and a leadership that, while nationalistic, was far less repressive. But my strong sense is that they want change to be brought about through their own efforts and managed in a way that prevents sectarian bloodletting and even civil war. Their fears of instability are well founded. Those from the Alawi sect dominate the upper echelons of the all-important security and intelligence services that keep the regime in power. Similarly, they hold key commands or other vital positions within the Syrian armed forces. Yet the Alawis comprise no more than 12 percent of the population of Syria. The Sunnis, who comprise about 74 percent of the populace, are the dominant religious strain. Ironically, the Alawis, a very heterodox offshoot of Shia Islam, were until well into the twentieth century the most downtrodden and impoverished religious sect within Syria.

As far as U.S. or U.N. sanctions are concerned, most Syrians undoubtedly believe that they will bear the consequences of their implementation while the elites go largely unscathed and unfazed by them. For this reason alone, any further sanctions should be to the greatest extent possible focused on malefactors rather than the Syrian population as a whole. They should also not hinder or harm people-to-people programs and relationships.

Syrians also have long questioned the fairness of imposing economic or other sanctions on their country, since they widely believe that Israel's continued occupation of the Golan violates the terms of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and that Israel has been able to ignore other Security Council resolutions with impunity.

According to accounts available to me, most Syrians accept their government's contention that the Lebanese by and large did not show the proper gratitude and respect for the perceived "sacrifices" Syria made "on their behalf" for almost 30 years. Furthermore, they were angered by attacks on and expulsions of Syrian workers in the wake of their army's withdrawal and by continuing anti-Syrian sentiments publicly expressed in some quarters of Lebanon.

Two overriding facts need to be kept in mind in trying to change the entrenched policies and behaviors of Syrian leaders. First, unilateral U.S. sanctions and pressures have limited utility. By far, the most effective measures directed at changing Syrian policy during President Bush's term in office has been the skillful diplomacy that led to passage of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1559 calling for Syria's withdrawal at the time when its regime engineered a three-year extension of President Lahoud's expiring term. Following the Hariri assassination, the U.S., working with France, the Security Council, the European Union, and key Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, managed to isolate Syria and leave it with no realistic option other than to withdraw its forces. In other words, a broad, multilateral approach, clearly targeted and grounded both in international law and consensus, offers the best chance of transforming Syria's behavior.

The second fact is that during most of the 43 years that the Ba'ath Party has ruled Syria, one or another foreign benefactor has been necessary to keep its largely statist economy afloat. Finally, at the beginning of this century, and in contravention of UNSC resolutions, Syria received cheap oil from Iraq which it was able to sell at a premium on the world market. As a result of these sales, it is likely that Syria still has considerable financial reserves to draw upon, but like virtually every other Arab country it must create jobs and other opportunities for a burgeoning youth population. It is hard to imagine a benefactor with both the intent and resources to bolster Syria's fragile economy.

If multilateral sanctions are the sine qua non for bringing meaningful pressure to bear on the regime and the country's finances are its Achilles heel, the question remains as to what is the triggering event. Personally I do not believe that it will be possible to get a strong enough consensus for such measures absent a damning report from U.N. Special Investigator Serge Bramertz. If his report does not present conclusive proof of high-level Syrian complicity in the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri and others, then Syria's leaders are likely to shrug it off. It is questionable if a U.N. Security Council resolution calling on Syria to establish formal diplomatic ties with Lebanon and to agree to jointly demarcate their border is sufficient to galvanize the international community given the number of similar disputes around the world.

Meanwhile, Syrian leaders are not waiting passively for further U.S.-led actions to harm its economy and politically isolate it. As U.S. oil companies divest themselves of production and exploration rights in Syria, Chinese, Russian and other companies are being given the opportunity to replace them. Syria is also attracting a modest amount of Gulf investment, particularly in real estate and tourism development. Longstanding ties with Iran and Hezbollah are being tended to assiduously as are those with Hamas.

Pro-reform forces in Lebanon have despaired at the impunity with which leading journalists critical of Syria have been killed. The country's leaders once again appear gridlocked, unable to deliver economic growth, let alone pay down the country's crushing debts. Increasingly the best educated are voting with one-way airline tickets.

My sense is that the million or so Lebanese who laudably turned out on March 14, 2005, to urge a pull-out of Syrian forces and reform of Lebanon's political system may be losing heart. We in the West had a tendency to overlook the half a million or more disciplined demonstrators who turned out on March 8 and all that they represent. They came at the behest of Hezbollah leader Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah to thank Syria and to indicate that a large swath of Lebanon's Shia community—a plurality in the country—believe their lot had improved because of close cooperation with Syria, and to signal that they would not countenance changes that would lead to the disarming of Hezbollah or a diminution of its influence. Subsequent events in Iraq have only exacerbated tensions between the Sunni and Shia communities. The traditional fractiousness of Lebanon's political class can also claim its share of blame for the country's lack of progress. Too often in Lebanon selfish motives and ambitions are put far ahead of the nation's interests. After all, Syria could not have so easily exercised the influence it did in Lebanon without the active complicity of many of the country's elites.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

Ambassador KATTOUF. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so very much, and we see the rest of your testimony here. Thank you.

And now we turn to Mr. Farid Ghadry, the President of the Reform Party of Syria. Welcome, Farid.

**STATEMENT OF MR. FARID GHADRY, PRESIDENT, REFORM
PARTY OF SYRIA**

Mr. GHADRY. Thank you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon, Honorable Members of the Subcommittee, ladies and gentlemen. It is with great honor that I stand before the distinguished Subcommittee to address you on behalf of the Syrian Democratic Coalition and the Reform Party of Syria represented by its spokesman, Mr. Oubai Shahbandar, a member of the Executive Committee, and Mr. Marc Hussein. I also want to thank my colleague Sheih Abdullah Al-Tamimi of the Free Patriotic Party and a member of the SDC, and Mr. Abdul Latif Al-Mounaair of the Syrian Third Alliance.

As we all know, Bashar al-Asad, the dictator of Syria has been openly hostile to the interests not only the Syrian, the Lebanese, the Iraqi, and the Jordanian people, but also to the interests of the international community through his unholy alliance with Iran. Asad has been on a wrecking expedition to insure that real democracy does not reach the shores of Syria.

Today, the regime feels safe and secure on several fronts. First, the Syrian opposition inside the country is stifled, and the exiled Syrian opposition is divided between a Ba'athist/Islamist front, and a liberal market economy front. Second, Iran is playing an important role in supporting Asad; and third, the pressure from the United States Administration has been inconsistent.

Inside Syria, the situation is impossible to the dissident community who is facing the wrath of the regime in the form of arrest, detention, harassment, long-term imprisonment, and even torture. Dissidents do not enjoy any freedom of expression because of a 43-year-old emergency laws journalists cannot expose government corruption or hold officials accountable. Intellectuals cannot meet or write. In short, human conditions are appalling.

May I mention in this regard Fateh Jamous, Mr. Michel Kilo, and Dr. Kamal Labwani who are facing life sentences for simply expressing freely their ideas, and so are many. I also want to salute the Khaznawi family that suffered the death of its great patriarch Sheikh Maa'choukh Al-Khaznawi at the hands of the Syrian authority.

The Syrian opposition is going through transformational changes that I am not sure serve the best interest of Syrians today. There are four major opposition strands that are shaping the dissident community.

First, the Damascus Declaration. We had seen a group of dissidents inside Syria form a new threat to the Asad regime united behind the Damascus Declaration, a document exploring the future of Your Honor. Today, the Damascus Declaration is almost non-existent because of oppression.

Second, the National Salvation Front was formed recently between the Muslim Brotherhood and the ex-Vice President of Syria Abdul Halim Khaddam. This alliance between the Ba'athists and the Islamists has rocked the opposition to its core for many reasons. It reminds us very much of the alliance in Iraq of the Islamists also and the Ba'athists. Khaddam was part and parcel of the Ba'ath party as a practitioner of authoritarian rule.

Furthermore, SDC and RPS, in fact, it is also Ba'athists. We also have information that Khaddam has laundered his wealth, private wealth, and we believe that these funds belong to the Syrian people, and we intend to return them.

The third movement is the Kurdish movement which is characterized by a mature opposition inside Syria. Those on the inside are very much influenced by the Iraqi leadership in the Kurdistan area of Iraq. The rally around three or four major strong political parties such as the Yekiti, the Kurdish Future Movement, and the Democratic Party. The Kurdish movement is strong and is able to mobilize the masses. We have excellent relationship with them yesterday and it is going forward.

The fourth is the Syrian Democratic Coalition represented by the people here. It is an organization of liberal and market economy political organizations and SDC the Arabs and the Kurds sit side by side so the Muslims—Sunni and Chia'a—Christians, Alawis, Druze, and many other groups representing the mosaic of Syria.

Our popularity inside and outside Syria is measurable on the rise from tribal leaders to the Ashrafs, or the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, and I would like to point out that Mr. al-Mounaier here with us comes from that family, they are straight descenders of our Prophet.

We have support inside Syria, and many of the people who signed on with the Damascus Declaration are secretly hoping we succeed because they lived under the Ba'athism for too long. We

are supported also because the leadership of the Syrian Democratic Coalition has no history of corruption or atrocities against the Syrian people.

Madam Chair, it pains me to testify today that we do not believe that the Syrian opposition is mature enough to assume power in Syria. We are still growing. The majority behave like the Ba'athists ruling our country. That is the unfortunate thing, with a set of exclusionary policies which are in direct conflict with real democracy.

Our short-term aim as such is to help unite the Syrian opposition, and until we do unite I feel that we are not ready yet. However, we have recommendations for the Subcommittee.

We ask this Honorable Subcommittee to seriously consider amendments to SALSA to force the Syrian Government to free all prisoners of conscious; to support openly the democratic Syrian opposition inside the country; to force the Syrian Government to lift all emergency laws; to rescind Article 8 of the Syrian Constitution; to rescind Law 49 of 1980; and to honor moderate Muslims in Syria and to protect their religious rights; to honor the Kurds, the Christians, the Alawis, the Druze and all other groups in Syria and to protect their heritage; and to honor Sheikh Ma'achouk al-Khaznawi for his courage. Lastly, we recommend that the United States and Europe invite the 10 most prominent Syrian opposition leaders in the hope that they can unite and become a viable alternative.

We thank this Honorable Committee for giving us the opportunity to be here today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ghadry follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. FARID GHADRY, PRESIDENT, REFORM PARTY OF SYRIA

Good afternoon Madame Chairman, Honorable Members of the Subcommittee, Ladies and gentlemen

It is with great honor that I stand before this distinguished Subcommittee on the Middle East in the US Congress to address you on behalf of the Syrian Democratic Coalition represented by its spokesman Mr. Jean Antar (who could not be with us today) and the Reform Party of Syria represented by its spokesman Mr. Oubai Shahbandar and a member of the Executive Committee Mr. Marc Hussein. I also want to thank my colleagues Sheikh Abdullah Al-Tamimi of the Free Patriotic Party and a member of the SDC, and Mr. Abdul Latif Al-Mounaair of the Syrian Third Alliance.

We thank the Subcommittee for giving us this opportunity to analyze the situation in Syria and what recommendations we have to the Syria Accountability Act.

STATUS OF THE ASSAD REGIME

As we all know, Baschar al-Assad, the dictator of Syria who inherited the presidency from his late father Hafez al-Assad, has been openly hostile to the interests of not only the Syrian, the Lebanese, the Iraqi, and the Jordanian people but also to the interests of the international community. Armed with an unholy alliance with Iran, and emboldened by the Hamas election win, Assad has been on a wrecking expedition to insure that real democracy does not reach the shores of Syria.

Today, the regime feels safe and secure on several fronts. First, the Syrian opposition inside the country is stifled, unable to even express its opinion let alone manage to become threatening to the regime; the exiled Syrian opposition is divided between a Ba'athist/Islamist front represented by National Salvation Front (NSF) and a liberal/market economy front represented by SDC. Second, Iran is playing an important role in supporting Assad. And third, the pressure from the US administration has been inconsistent; we believe mainly because of other pressing international strategic issues.

STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS CONDITIONS INSIDE SYRIA

Inside Syria, the situation is impossible to the hundreds of civil society individuals who are facing the wrath of the regime in the form of arrests, detentions, con-

stant harassment, long-term imprisonment, and even torture. Dissidents are unable to express freely their beliefs; journalists are unable to expose government corruption or hold officials accountable; intellectuals are unable to meet and educate the masses about the benefits of a strong civil society. In short, human rights conditions are appalling and we urge this Subcommittee to address this issue by amending SALSA.

Syria is governed under the threat of a set of Emergency Laws that empowers the Syrian authorities to arrest anyone for any reason bypassing whatever constitutional protections Syrians have. These laws have been enforced ever since the Syrian Ba'ath Party came to power, exactly 43 years ago.

Using these emergency laws, in the last few weeks, many dissidents have been arrested and some exposed to beating. May I take this opportunity to mention in this regard Mr. Fateh Jamous, Mr. Michel Kilo, and Dr. Kamal Labwani who are facing life sentences for expressing freely their ideas? I also would like to mention Dr. Aref Dalilah, Mr. Ali Abdullah and his son Mohammad, Mr. Mohammad Al-Ghanem, Mr. Khalil Hussein, Mr. Riad Darar, Mr. Omar al-Abdullah, Mr. Diab Suriya, Mr. Nizar Rastwani, Mr. Ayham Sakr, Mr. Alam Fakhour, Mr. Maher Isber, Mr. Hissam Milhem, Mr. Ali Al-Ali, Mr. Fayez al-Hallak, Mr. Anwar Hamoudah, Mr. Amer Kezaranah, Mr. Tarek Al-Ghorani, and Mr. Fahd Da'adoush who all still languish in prisons in addition to hundreds of Kurdish citizens. Also, the illegal arrest and harassment of Dr. Ammar Qurabi, Mr. Riad Seif, Mr. Ma'amun Al-Homs, Mr. Najati Tayyara, and Mr. Samir Nashar as well as Mr. Abdul Sattar Qattan who has been imprisoned for 12 years for reasons unknown; not to mention the constant harassment of the Damascus Spring dissidents to stop them from meeting. In brief, the Syrian dissident and civil society community is under siege inside Syria. We honor their work and lend them our full support.

We also salute the Khaznawi family that suffered the death of its great patriarch Sheikh Maa'choukh Al-Khaznawi at the hands of the Syrian authorities. Sheikh Al-Khaznawi was an example of servitude, honesty, and moderation to all Syrians.

I also want to mention that many Syrians languish in Iraqi jails and we hope this Subcommittee helps to free the innocent so that they can return to their families. On this score, we urge you to inquire with the Department of Defense of their fate in Iraq. This will go a long way in showing that the US Congress stands by the Syrian people in their suffering whether at home or elsewhere.

SYRIAN OPPOSITION STATUS

The Syrian opposition is going through transformational change that I am not too sure serves the best interests of Syria.

Today, there are four major opposition strands that are shaping the dissident community: 1) Remnants of the Damascus Declaration (DD); 2) The National Salvation Front (NSF); 3) The Syrian Democratic Coalition (SDC); 4) The Kurdish Movement (KM).

1. Damascus Declaration

In the past six months, we have seen a group of dissidents inside Syria form a new threat to the Assad regime at the height of Assad's fear from an international backlash to the killing of Hariri. United behind the Damascus Declaration, a document exploring the future outlook of a new Syria, most of these dissidents have faltered because of the recent pressure from the regime and because of the inability to be active. The majority of Syrians involved in DD practice the policies of excluding others. The best example is how Damascus Declaration dissidents treated Dr. Kamal Al-Labwani when he returned to Damascus after meeting w/J.D. Crouch, Assistant to the President. They lent him no support and ignored his plight when sent to prison. Most of the Damascus Declaration dissidents see the United States as a big evil country and refuse to have any realistic vision on how to change the regime. Today, the Damascus Declaration is non-existent with many dissidents joining two other opposition camps: The Syrian Democratic Coalition and the National Salvation Front. However, the Syrian opposition outside still claims the legitimacy of DD because it legitimizes their struggle.

2. National Salvation Front

The National Salvation Front was formed recently between the Muslim Brotherhood and the ex-vice president of Syria Abdul Halim Khaddam, a Syrian-Saudi who defected after 35 years of service to the Ba'ath Party. This unholy alliance between the Ba'athists and the Islamists has rocked the opposition to its core for many reasons. Khaddam was part and parcel of the Ba'ath Party, and remains so today. He played an important role in defining and protecting the dictatorship of Hafez al-Assad in such areas as stifling liberties of Syrians and taming Lebanon to the

whims of the Assad family. His past corruption in a non-accountable environment makes him an unpopular figure amongst Syrians.

The first act of the National Salvation Front was to draw “red lines” against some of the opposition figures and organizations very similar to the ones we see practiced by the Ba’ath Party. The first lesson of democracy is to accept the other political point of view and try to win your arguments not through exclusion but through persuasion. On that score, NSF has failed the democracy test and many of us believe that some of the Syrian opposition figures leading the NSF are as autocratic as the Assad regime and do not truly understand or care to understand what democracy is all about. NSF, for its part, is betting that stability matters more than democracy.

The Assad regime has oppressed the MB greatly through the execution of any of their members using Syrian Law 49 of 1980. Syrians sympathize with the MB because of the unfairness of Law 49, which serves the Assad regime well because it is able to say that the alternative to our rule are the Islamists. We Syrians believe that the US Congress can and should help pressure the Assad regime to revoke Syrian Law 49 because it is inhuman by amending SALSA.

Furthermore, SDC has verifiable information that Khaddam, between September and December of 2005, and just prior to joining the opposition, allegedly laundered five billion USD, deposited in Swiss bank accounts, through high-level Saudi connections. These funds must be returned to the Syrian and Lebanese people, their legitimate owners. The sad part is that Khaddam is trying to change his image to one fighting corruption when he is the ultimate corrupt official.

3. *Syrian Democratic Coalition*

The Syrian Democratic Coalition is an amalgamation of liberal and market economy political and humanist organizations. In SDC, the Arabs and the Kurds sit side-by-side so do Muslims (Sunni and Shia’a), Christians, Alawites, Druze, and many other groups representing the mosaic of Syria.

On June 9, 2005 and during the 10th Ba’ath Congress, the Ba’ath party declared the Syrian Democratic Coalition and the Reform Party of Syria (RPS) as non-entities, enemies of the State. From that date on, anyone associated with, deals with, or joins SDC or RPS are automatically questioned and jailed. Many of our supporters are in jail today.

As such, the movement is under constant attacks not only by the communist/nationalist movements inside Syria, who see our vision as emulating the success of many countries in the west as a dangerous precedent, but also by the Ba’athists such as we find in Khaddam’s National Salvation Front. We, liberals, are a threat to the Assad regime and to all those who wish to continue with the same old policies that have failed Syria.

Our popularity inside and outside Syria is measurable and on the rise. From tribal leaders to the Ashrafs (Mr. al-Mounaer present here is a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad—SAAS), SDC is the umbrella organization able to unite Syrians without any bias. Inside Syria, many of the people who signed on with the Damascus Declaration are secretly hoping we succeed because they lived under Ba’athism for too long and want to experience a new Syria with policies that have a record of success. None of them wants Syria to be another laboratory for one more set of failed Ba’athist policies. We are also supported because the leadership of the Syrian Democratic Coalition has no history of corruption or atrocities against the Syrian people.

SDC is meeting within soon to announce our program for peaceful transition to democracy for Syria. After the announcement, we believe that SDC will gain the momentum necessary to have more vocal support, which has been lacking for fear of retribution.

4. *The Kurdish Movement*

The Kurdish Movement is characterized by a mature opposition inside Syria and one that is more nascent outside Syria. Those on the inside are very much influenced by the Iraqi leadership in the Kurdistan area of Iraq. They rally around three or four strong political parties such as the Yekiti, the Kurdish Future Movement, and the Democratic Party. The Kurdish movement is strong and is able to mobilize the masses. Their leadership is the most democratic we have witnessed amongst all the other opposition parties. It is very important for this Subcommittee to meet with some of the leaders of these political organizations or their representatives.

The Kurdish Movement promotes the aspiration of the Kurdish people who have been mistreated by the previous as well as the present Assad regime, their lands confiscated, and their culture and language stifled. Kurds in Syria are treated as third class citizens even though their contribution to the Syrian society and its economy is considerable. SDC and RPS intend to partner with the Kurdish movement,

upon return to Syria, to write our new constitution. Only through determination of their own destiny can Syrians experience true democracy. Their fate is directly connected to the future of our democracy in Syria.

We ask the Subcommittee to honor the Kurds for their courage and to pressure the Assad regime, through amendments to the Syria Accountability Act, to free the Kurds who are still languishing in Syrian jails. We also ask the Subcommittee to hear the testimony of prominent Kurdish leaders from the US and Europe for details of their plight.

SDC relationship with the Kurdish Movement is strong and continues to grow because of common values and goals.

Mme. Chairman, it pains me to testify today that we do not believe that the Syrian opposition is mature enough to assume power in Syria. The majority behaves like the Ba'athists ruling the country with a set of exclusionary policies, which are in direct conflict with real democracy. Our short term aim, as such, is to give-up on the issue of regime change in Syria until the opposition unites.

5. Recommendations for US Policymakers

We ask this honorable Subcommittee to seriously consider amendments to SALSA for the following:

- A) Amend SALSA to force the Syrian government to free ALL prisoners of conscience.
- B) Amend SALSA to support openly the democratic Syrian opposition inside the country.
- C) Amend SALSA to force the Syrian government to lift all Emergency Laws.
- D) Amend SALSA to rescind Article 8 of the Syrian Constitution.
- E) Amend SALSA to rescind Law 49 of 1980.
- F) Amend SALSA to honor moderate Muslims in Syria and to protect their religious rights.
- G) Amend SALSA to honor the Kurds, the Christians, the Alawites, the Druze and all other groups in Syria and to protect their heritage.
- H) Amend SALSA to honor Sheikh Ma'achouk al-Khaznawi for his courage.
- I) The US and Europe can invite the 10 most prominent Syrian opposition leaders in the hope that they can unite and become a viable alternative.

ADDITIONAL FACTS ABOUT SYRIA (FOR THE RECORD)

The Ba'ath party is the enemy of democracy. Like Nazism, the Ba'athist Assad regime encourages hate and enmity against anyone that does not support their ideology. If given the chance to think freely, most Syrians will appreciate the United States if it helps bring about their freedom peacefully.

Part of my work as one of the leaders in the opposition, a Muslim-American, and a keen observer of Middle East politics is to provide a snapshot that can help the US Congress understand the great divide that exists today in the social fabric of the Syrian society; a divide that can only be reconciled with some heavy lifting on the part of the Syrian opposition that inevitably will see regime change as the only reasonable alternative to the Assad era of oppression and corruption. On that score, let me present the following important points:

1. Liberal Arab voices are stifled by the authoritarian Arab regimes and although, there are some genuine efforts to help, over all they are not provided the backing they deserve by the west. Organizations like the Hudson Institute, Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, Freedom House, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, and American Enterprise Institute are helping immensely but we are still fragmented. We look for the US Congress to fund the think tanks mentioned for the purpose of raising the profiles of liberal movements. We believe any upcoming and much needed Arab renaissance will be influenced by Muslims who have experienced governance in western societies. We want to thank the NEA at the US State Department for their continued support of Syrian dissidents in all aspects.
2. The people of Syria are proud and honorable people that have been subjected to a ruthless totalitarian regime. In recent months, the Syrian opposition has witnessed old Ba'athists, dressed in a democracy cloak and touting salvation for Syrians, present themselves as an alternative to the Assad regime in the hope that they can bring back the same policies, under a new name, that have failed Syria. Their actions of exclusion and hate mirror those of the Assad regime and we believe Syrians deserve better. We ask that the US Congress amends SALSA to block any support for corrupt Ba'athists planting themselves inside the opposition.

3. The Assyrians and Caledonians, in addition to other Christian groups, who are the indigenous people of Syria, have been forced to emigrate for lack of opportunity, discrimination, and suppression of their religious rights. We appeal to this subcommittee to understand their plight. Only freedom and democracy can restore their rights to celebrate their contribution to the Syrian society and help facilitate for their safe return to Syria.
4. Women in Syria suffer on two fronts: 1) Lack of a support system and laws to protect the abused and the disfranchised and 2) Lack of economic opportunities that stifle their hopes. Liberalism and a vibrant market economy is the best protection we can afford women in Syria. I cannot emphasize to this Subcommittee how important the impact of the role of Syrian women will have on the Syrian society.
5. In 1982, the guns of the Assad family were turned against the innocent Syrian people in Hama that leveled this small historical city. When the smoke settled and cleared, up to 30,000 innocent people were massacred. Syrians are starting to mobilize to bring the criminals who committed this genocide to the International Court of Justice in The Hague.
6. Our youth suffer on two fronts: 1) Unemployment of up to 60% amongst less than 25 years old, which breeds restlessness and in turn can breed a readiness to be recruited for terrorism, and 2) An unfair two-year mandatory military service that has become a well oiled corruption machine. We will, upon return to Syria, change the Syrian Constitution to ban mandatory military service. Syria does not need over 300,000 soldiers nor do we need to spend valuable resources on an arm race we are sure to lose. Our resources are better utilized helping the Syrian economy.
7. Corruption in Syria touches everyone and the Assad regime has permitted corruption to run amok. Syrians pay officials to have medical operations, they pay officials to get a phone line, they pay school officials to pass exams, and even they pay judges to get the verdict they want. Corruption is breeding a sense of hopelessness, especially amongst our youth, which inevitably feed our young minds with anger. Why are we surprised at what drives a suicide bomber to kill and be killed? People in the Middle East have no hope in any prosperous future because of the authoritarian systems in place, which smother their attempted rise from poverty.
8. The New Syria must compensate Syrian families who lost their assets and lands in the fifties to nationalization and three failed agriculture reforms. This compensation must be based on the fair market value of these assets today. Additionally, we believe that the traditional merchant families of Syria represent an important component that can and will save Syria from an ever looming economic disaster.
9. The New Syria must also compensate all prisoners of conscience financially for their illegal detention and imprisonment. Once the Assad era ends, we will propose a new legislation in the Syrian parliament to compensate generously all ex-prisoners. Some of them are tomorrow's leaders of Syria; they represent the brightest minds that chose to stay and suffer to help save their country. We Syrians abroad honor them and owe them our unconditional respect.

We thank this honorable Subcommittee for giving us the opportunity to speak about our beloved Syria.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much for your excellent testimony. Thank you. I am sure we will have a lot of questions for you. Appreciate it.

Professor Deeb, professor from the School of Advanced International Studies. Welcome.

STATEMENT OF MARIUS DEEB, PH.D., PROFESSOR, THE MIDDLE EAST STUDIES PROGRAM, THE PAUL H. NITZE SCHOOL OF ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

Mr. DEEB. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. If you could hit that little bar and you will see the green light come on.

Mr. DEEB. Oh, yes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. And hold that microphone as close as you can to you.

Mr. DEEB. Sure. Thank you, Madam Chair, and Members of the Subcommittee for inviting me to testify today. I want to concentrate on one dimension which I think it is Syria's Achilles' heel. It is Syria and Lebanon, and obviously I am emphasizing the part which is the Lebanese sovereignty restoration part of the Syria Accountability Act.

A lot has been achieved since the passing of the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act years ago. The Syrian militia occupation in Lebanon ended and a new Parliament was elected, and a new cabinet headed by Prime Minister Siniora took office.

Nevertheless, the sovereignty of Lebanon has not yet been fully restored. Syrian puppets are still occupying leading positions in the country. This applies to President Emile Lahhoud who according to Prime Minister Siniora is not free to resign because the Syrians have threatened him if he steps down.

Nabih Birri, a Syrian proxy and agent for the last 30 years, is still the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament. The most significant infringement of Lebanese sovereignty is the state within a state that is the heavily armed Syrian proxy Hezbollah which perpetuates the state within the state in Lebanon.

Unless these issues are addressed the restoration of Lebanese sovereignty will not be complete. It is of utmost importance to achieve this goal because it will make it more difficult for Syria to continue its terrorist war against Lebanon by targeting leading politicians and journalists as it did during the period from June to December 2005. Just to remind, you started with the assassination of the prominent journalist on the 2nd of June, and this campaign, I hope it ended but I doubt it because the regime is a terrorist regime to its core with assassination of Jubran Twani, a member of Parliament, a leader of the Syrian revolution and a publisher of the most prestigious newspaper in Lebanon, *Mahat*. So that terrorism continues and this war against Lebanon has to be stopped.

A fully restored sovereignty which is the precondition for a fully fledged democracy could in turn inspire democratic forces in Syria to challenge the authoritarian Asad regime. Historically, Lebanon as a democratic polity had always an impact on its Arab hinterland and on Syria in particular.

The United States and the international community have been supporting the Lebanese people to have a free, independent and sovereign Lebanon. To continue in this support the leaders of the Cedar Revolution, who have the vast majority of the seats in Parliament, should be encouraged to have Presidential elections sooner than later to replace President Emile Lahhoud.

The most popular candidate, according to reliable polls conducted in Lebanon, is General Michel 'Awn. The popularity of 'Awn, especially among the Christians and the Shi'is, and the agreement with Hezbollah that he signed on February 6, 2006, symbolically at the St. Michael's Maronite Catholic Church located on the former greenline that divided the city, will enable him to convince Hezbollah to give up its arms peacefully to the Lebanese Army.

Michel 'Awn, as the former commander of the army between 1984 and 1990 and who initiated the War of Liberation against Syria in March 1989, I think he will not tolerate any infringement of Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The disarmament of Hezbollah and the deployment of the Lebanese Army at the Lebanese-Israeli border, a demand that has been voiced by all the leaders of the Cedar Revolution, will put an end to all attacks against Israel from southern Lebanon. The disarmament of Hezbollah will free the Shi'is to choose their own representatives in Parliament instead of being initiated by the heavily armed Hezbollah and its ally Nabih Birri's Amal to elect only candidates chosen by these two militias.

The disarmament of Hezbollah will weaken its patron Syria and Iran, and will be a dent in the war against terrorism as Hezbollah is the most powerful terrorist organization in the world after al-Qaeda. Removing Hezbollah from the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah axis would further weaken the Asad regime and enhance the prospects for democratic change in Syria.

So I think in terms of changes in Syria, in my opinion the regime is coup-proof, it is very powerful and also it has its role in Iraq will make it whatever happens in Iraq will—the Iraqi regime which will emerge will be close to Syria, so it is only the place where we can really make a difference is to do the continue implementation of 359 in Lebanon.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Deeb follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARIUS DEEB, PH.D., PROFESSOR, THE MIDDLE EAST STUDIES PROGRAM, THE PAUL H. NITZE SCHOOL OF ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

Thank you Mr. Chairman, and members of the Subcommittee for inviting me to testify today. A lot has been achieved since the passing of the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act two years ago. The Syrian military occupation of Lebanon ended, a new parliament was elected and a new cabinet headed by Fouad Siniora took office. Nevertheless, the sovereignty of Lebanon has not yet been fully restored. Syrian puppets are still occupying leading positions in the country. This applies to President Emile Lahhoud who according to Prime Minister Siniora is not free to resign because the Syrians have threatened him if he steps down. Nabih Birri a Syrian agent for the last thirty years is still the Speaker of the Lebanese parliament. The most significant infringement of Lebanese sovereignty is the state within a state that the heavily armed Syrian proxy Hezbollah perpetuates. Unless these issues are addressed the restoration of Lebanese sovereignty will not be complete. It is of utmost importance to achieve this goal because it will make it more difficult for Syria to continue its terrorist war against Lebanon by targeting leading politicians and journalists as it did during the period from June to December 2005. A fully restored sovereignty which is the precondition for a fully fledged democracy could in turn inspire democratic forces in Syria to challenge the authoritarian Asad regime. Historically Lebanon as a democratic polity had always an impact on its Arab hinterland and on Syria in particular.

The U.S. and the international community have been supporting the Lebanese people to have a free, independent and sovereign Lebanon. To continue in this support the leaders of the Cedar Revolution, who have the vast majority of the seats in parliament, should be encouraged to have presidential elections sooner than later to replace President Emile Lahhoud. The most popular candidate, according to reliable polls conducted in Lebanon, is General Michel 'Awn. The popularity of 'Awn especially among the Christians and the Shi'is, and the agreement with Hezbollah that he signed on February 6, 2006 symbolically at St. Michael's Maronite Catholic church located on the former greenline that divided the city, will enable him to convince Hezbollah to give up its arms peacefully to the Lebanese Army. Michel 'Awn as the former commander of the Lebanese Army (1984-1990) and the initiator of the War of Liberation against the Syria in March 1989 will not tolerate any infringe-

ment of Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity. The disarmament of Hezbollah and the deployment of the Lebanese Army at the Lebanese-Israeli borders, a demand that has been voiced by all the leaders of the Cedar Revolution, will put an end to all attacks against Israel from southern Lebanon. The disarmament of Hezbollah will free the Shi'is to choose their own representatives in parliament instead of being intimidated by the heavily armed Hezbollah and its ally Nabih Birri's Amal to elect only candidates chosen by these two militias.

The disarmament of Hezbollah will weaken its patrons Syria and Iran, and will be a dent in the war against terrorism as Hezbollah is the most powerful terrorist organization in the world after al-Qa'idah. Removing Hezbollah from the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah axis would further weaken the Asad regime and enhance the prospects for democratic change in Syria.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Professor.
Mr. Schenker, appreciate you being here.

**STATEMENT OF MR. DAVID SCHENKER, SENIOR FELLOW IN
ARAB POLITICS, WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST
POLICY**

Mr. SCHENKER. Thank you, Madam Chairman and others distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. It is an honor and a pleasure to testify before you today on the important issue of Syria and United States policy.

As the Chairwoman noted, prior to joining the Washington Institute in 2002 to 2006, I served as the Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan and Palestinian Affairs Advisor in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. That said, I would like to assure you, Madam Chairwoman, that my remarks today are those of a private citizen and have in no way been coordinated with the Administration.

It has been about 2 years since the Administration started implementing the Syria Accountability Act. Today, United States-Syrian relations have reached a low point. The relationship has deteriorated not because of the law, but because of persistent Syrian intransigents in the face of the United States and international pressures. Aside from some cosmetic changes, Washington is still contending with the same litany of challenges that Congress cited as the original rationale for the legislation.

Of course, United States difficulties with Syria are not new and neither are the problems of crafting an effective policy to pressure Syria.

When I was working in the Pentagon, Assistant Secretary of Defense Peter Rodman told me that decades ago when he was working for Henry Kissinger the Administration was grappling with the same issues.

Administration policy today is focused on employing Syria Accountability Act and other unilateral and multilateral tools in its arsenal to compel a change in Syrian behavior. To date, however, Administration efforts to ratchet up pressure have encountered some real challenges, not the least of which has been a lack of momentum due to distractions; in particular, more pressing priorities like Iraq, Iran, and Hamas.

But there have also been self-inflicted wounds. For example, the same week that President Bush signed the bill into law in December 2003 he also posted the new U.S. Ambassador to Damascus, sending a mixed signal to the outside regime. Likewise, it took the Administration over 2 years to impose the Patriot Act Section 311

sanctions, arguably the most severe sanctions available. In my opinion, the delay was unwarranted.

Sadly though, even if the Administration had implemented the entire menu of sanctions available under the Syria Accountability Act, they would likely not be sufficient to pressure the Syrians to change some of their key problematic policies.

Can we expect modifications at the margins? Possibly. Significant policy changes? Not likely. The problem, of course, is that Syria for decades has proven largely impervious to pressure.

Despite challenges the Administration has achieved some modest successes. While the Administration cannot take sole credit for the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, it did contribute to an international environment supportive of Lebanese independence, its work on the UN Security Council Resolution 1559. The Administration also has been very effective at the UN orchestrating several UN resolutions that have been devastating to Syria.

We are starting also to see signs of opposition to the outside regime both inside and outside of Syria. While it is not panacea, it is an important development.

The bottom line though is that Syria continues to undermine several strategic United States goals in the region, particularly in Iraq, Israel and the Palestinian Authority and Lebanon. After withstanding United States and international pressure for so long, Damascus believes that it has dodged the bullet and the Asad regime appears more confident than at any time since 2003.

Asad has been reckless in provoking the United States but so far he hasn't paid a price high enough to force him to change his policies. While the Administration has been critical of Syria, actions to date have not matched the rhetoric. This has created somewhat of a credibility problem and has emboldened the regime.

The U.S. Government is not going to convince Asad that it knows better what his interests are. This is naive supposition. The Asad's regime has ruled Syria for 30 years. Whatever they are doing seems to be working for their interests. The carrots for a change in behavior are there, peace with Israel, economic relations, foreign assistance, but they have not proved enticing enough. It may be that the Asad regime is irredeemable.

Regardless, the task before the Administration today is to raise the cost for Syrian misdeeds. Sadly, the Administration has not been able to do so since the Syria Accountability Act has passed.

In a few weeks the Administration may have the chance to regain the initiative on Syria. In June, the Brammertz Report into the investigation of the Hariri assassination will be published. Should the report implicate senior Asad regime officials, it will provide a moment of opportunity for the Administration to work with international allies to force changes.

There are no guarantees that this report will provide a smoking gun, and if it does not, Syria may once again dodge the bullet and succeed in waiting out yet another Administration.

If the report does finger Syria, however, Congress can and should play an important role in working with the Administration to help create a legislative framework that will increase pressure on Syria.

I would also like to note I have an article that was published in this past week's *Weekly Standard* that discusses the state of the

Administration's Syria policy. I am told I cannot submit this for the record due to copyright rules, but I would commend you to look at it.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Schenker follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. DAVID SCHENKER, SENIOR FELLOW IN ARAB POLITICS,
WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY

President Bush signed the implementing order of the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act (SAA) on May 11, 2004. Today, two years later, the United States still contends with nearly all of the challenges that formed the basis for this important piece of legislation. The litany of Syrian misdeeds underpinning Public Law 108-175 is well known and includes *inter alia*, support for terrorism, undermining stability in Iraq, continued meddling in Lebanon, and ongoing development of WMD and ballistic missile programs. Despite these sanctions and other outside pressures, aside from some minor adjustments Syria's behavior has not changed.

Syria has proven a tough nut to crack. The SAA has helped, although the Legislation itself is not sufficient to compel a change in Syrian behavior. The Bush Administration has adopted some steps, but the challenge is how to leverage the SAA in conjunction with other tools at the Administration's disposal—multilateral efforts in particular—to ratchet-up the pressure on Syria to force behavioral change.

Of course, this could all change when the UN Investigative Report into the March 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri is released later this month. If Belgian prosecutor Serge Brammertz' report implicates the highest level of the Syrian Government, great international pressure could be brought against Damascus and the Baathist regime of President Bashar Asad. Presently, the Administration and the Syrians are anxiously awaiting the Brammertz report.

To date, however, the Administration has not capitalized on all available opportunities. More important, Damascus believes it has dodged the bullet. Today, two years after President Bush signed the SAA implementing order, the regime of Bashar Asad appears more confident than at any time since 2003.

EARLY DAYS OF ADMINISTRATION AMBIVALENCE

It's no secret that the Administration opposed the SAA when Congress initially sponsored the bill. This response was understandable, perhaps, given the President's desire to protect executive prerogative. The Administration may have also balked at signing the legislation out of concern that the sanctions would end Syrian cooperation with the U.S. on *Al Qaeda*. Indeed, up to that point, Syrian cooperation was by all accounts useful. In its letter asking Congress not to move forward in April 2002, however, the Administration indicated that it opposed the SAA because it would constrain the President's freedom of action. As Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs Paul Kelly wrote:

"If our efforts on both comprehensive peace and the war against terrorism are to succeed, the president and the secretary [of State] 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 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."

When President Bush did eventually sign the SAA into law December 2003, he posted the U.S. Ambassador to Damascus, Ambassador Scobey the very same week. Prior to Ambassador Scobey's appointment, the Ambassador's seat in Damascus had been empty for four months. The timing of this posting no doubt sent a mixed message to the Syrians, taking some of the sting out of the law.

Five months after signing the bill, in May 2004, the Administration rolled out its sanctions choices. Essentially, the Administration agreed to implement the Congressionally-mandated prohibition (of export of munitions and dual-use items), as well as 1) the prohibition of exports other than food or medicine to Syria, and 2) the prohibition on Syrian aircraft landing or taking off from the U.S. At the same time, the Administration announced that it was imposing, albeit at a later date, Section 311 PATRIOT ACT sanctions, and International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) designations.

In practice, the first three of these measures resulted in some additional scrutiny of an already-constricted U.S.-Syrian trade relationship. Indeed, trade with Syria had previously been subject to controls based on its status as a State Sponsor of Terrorism. The IEEPA and PATRIOT ACT sanctions were significant pressure tools, however. Regrettably, these measures were held in reserve for up to two years after the implementing executive order was signed.

IEEPA (EXECUTIVE ORDER 13338)

When President Bush signed E.O. 13338 implementing IEEPA in May 2004, he declared “a state of emergency” regarding Syria, authorizing the Department of Treasury in consultation with Department of State, to freeze assets within U.S. jurisdiction, belonging to Syrian individuals and government entities. This authority was significant; indeed, it has been described by the 9–11 Commission as some of the “most powerful tools in the U.S. legal arsenal.”

The Administration first used this authority in July 2005, when it identified Ghazi Kanaan and Rustom Ghazali, then former and current Syrian Intelligence Chiefs in Lebanon, as Special Designated Nationals under E.O. 13338 for directing “Syria’s military and security presence in Lebanon and/or contributing to Syria’s support for terrorism.” More recently, in January 2006—following the preliminary findings of the Hariri investigation—the Administration designated Assef Shawkat, current Director of Syrian Military Intelligence, for directly furthering the Syria’s support for terrorism and interference in the sovereignty of Lebanon.

While IEEPA designations only affect those financial accounts registered in the U.S.—and hence do not directly effect Syrian leaders, most of whom hold their accounts in Europe and the Middle East—the action can be expanded via other Executive Orders (such as E.O. 13224) to impose sanctions against individuals, organizations and financial institutions that service those designated persons. Hence, the designations potentially have a long reach. This did not escape the Syrians, who were clearly rattled by the designations of these high ranking officials.

Regrettably, although the President has used other authorities (E.O. 13315) to designate a Syrian company and its proprietors (SES International owned by the Shaleesh family) for its dealings with the former Iraqi regime in 2005, to date the Administration has implemented IEEPA designations against only three Syrians.

PATRIOT ACT SECTION 311 SANCTIONS

Like IEEPA, PATRIOT ACT Section 311 Sanctions constitute a significant arrow in the Administration’s sanctions quiver. PATRIOT ACT section 311 target financial institutions deemed to be primary money laundering concerns. When implemented, the sanctions require U.S. financial institutions to sever all accounts with the targeted institution.

To date, the Administration has used this tool to great effect throughout the globe. Of note, Department of Treasury leveled these sanctions in 2005 against a Manacnese Bank called Banco Delta Asia, which had been facilitating a great deal of illegal North Korean activities. According to Treasury, implementation of this sanction in 2005 helped limit the amount of dirty money going to Kim Jung Il’s regime.

While PATRIOT ACT Section 311 sanctions were cited by the Administration in the May 2004 White House statement, the citation was merely a reference to an “a notice of proposed rulemaking”—one step in a lengthy process toward implementation. In fact, the sanctions against the Commercial Bank of Syria and its Lebanese subsidiary, the Syrian-Lebanese Commercial Bank were not implemented until March 2006. Why the delay?

In the two years between the initial designation and signing the final rule, PATRIOT ACT Section 311 sanctions were first held out as a Damocles sword over Damascus—at first to convince Asad to return some \$800M in stolen Iraqi Assets. After more than a year of haggling, the Syrians grudgingly returned some \$275M to Iraq, via the Development Fund for Iraq or “DFI.” The remaining \$500M or so disappeared, probably distributed to Asad regime cronies. It also disappeared from the Administration’s Syria radar screen.

Later, PATRIOT ACT Section 311 sanctions were employed to pressure Syria to proceed with legislative reform of its banking system to inhibit use of its financial system for terrorist financing and money laundering. Some technical changes were eventually incorporated into Syrian legislation, but they were far too few, and there was little confidence they would be implemented. Eventually, after the Hariri assassination, the Administration came to the conclusion that this avenue was exhausted, and decided to finally move ahead with the “final rule.” The Section 311 sanctions were leveled two months ago.

These PATRIOT ACT sanctions are particularly onerous, and are undoubtedly the harshest sanctions the Administration has leveled against the Syrians to date. Given the potential impact of this measure, it is unfortunate it took the Administration so long to implement.

NON-CONGRESSIONALLY MANDATED MEASURES

In addition to the Syria Accountability Act sanctions, the Administration has independently pursued a number of initiatives designed to increase pressure on Syria. The administration has done particularly well at the United Nations. Most prominently, since 2004, the administration has orchestrated a series of Security Council resolutions that have proved devastating to Syrian interests. This effort started in 2004 with the passage of UNSCR 1559—which called for an end to the decades-long Syrian presence in Lebanon and the disarming of Hezbollah—and continued with UNSCRs 1595 and 1636, which established and entrenched a U.N.-led investigation into the February 2005 assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri and demanded cooperation from Syria, almost certainly a central player in the killing.

Likewise, after the Hariri murder, the Administration actively started meeting with individuals and groups involved in the Syrian opposition, including one well-publicized State Department meeting between a delegation led by Syrian Reform Party leader Farid Ghadry and a U.S.-delegation led by then Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs, Elizabeth Cheney in 2005. Administration officials at State, NSC, and Defense also convened a series of less-well publicized meetings with other Syrian oppositionists. This policy was backed in February 2006 with \$5M in U.S. funding for Syrian civil society.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

The Administration has been extremely critical in its public pronouncements regarding Syria in recent years. After it was reported that Damascus was maintaining training camps for Iraqi insurgents in 2005, for example, American Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad threatened U.S. military action. “Syria has to decide what price it’s willing to pay in making Iraq success difficult. And time is running out for Damascus to decide on this issue,” he said. A few months earlier, President Bush singled out Syria in the State of the Union address:

“To promote peace in the broader Middle East, we must confront regimes that continue to harbor terrorists and pursue weapons of mass murder. Syria still allows its territory, and parts of Lebanon, to be used by terrorists who seek to destroy every chance of peace in the region. You have passed, and we are applying, the Syrian Accountability Act—and we expect the Syrian government to end all support for terror and open the door to freedom.”

More recently, in April of this year, U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Jeffrey Feltman condemned Damascus for “yet another cynical attempt . . . to interfere in the Lebanese political process and intimidate the Lebanese people and their political leaders.”

As the Administration was condemning Syria and implementing SAA sanctions to pressure the regime, Washington was sending senior level delegations to Damascus to meet with President Asad. These meetings were occurring even as Syria was contributing to rising American casualties in Iraq. Between 2003 and 2005 the Departments of State, Defense, Treasury, and the National Security Council dispatched five senior delegations to Damascus to cajole, and later to warn President Asad that there would be consequences for continued Syrian meddling in Iraq and support for terrorism.

These discussions only succeeded in alleviating pressure on the regime by delaying the imposition of tougher measures. Adding insult to injury, these trips, though the emissaries delivered blunt messages, were publicly spun by Syrian officials as “breakthroughs” in Syrian-U.S. relations.

In the interest of peace and in pursuit of U.S. policy goals, the Administration has left no stone unturned and has made every effort to avoid direct confrontation with Damascus. Even in April, as the President was preparing to sign the implementing order, the Administration made a last ditch effort to avoid sanctions by dispatching Ambassador Scobey to deliver a message to President Asad, urging him to “work closely with the rest of the international community to promote a stable Iraq,” and to stop the flow of insurgents into Iraq. At the time, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said that the Administration decision to implement sanctions would “be affected by whatever Syria does.” “I’m sure if Syria takes positive, concrete steps,” he said, “those steps will be considered.”

In retrospect, the Syrian eagerness to engage in a dialogue with the Administration appeared to be part of President's Asad's strategy to stave off more severe sanctions. At least this appears to be the case with Syria's January 2004 "peace" overture, and the September 2004 Syrian trial balloon of U.S.-Syrian joint military patrols on the Syrian-Iraqi border.

ADMINISTRATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Despite adversity, the Administration has achieved some successes in its Syria policy as a result of the SAA and other UN pressures related to the Hariri assassination. Perhaps the most compelling development regarding Syria during this Administration has been the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. The March 2005 withdrawal was the product of a Lebanon unified in outrage in the wake of the Hariri assassination. But to some extent, the withdrawal was facilitated by the international context of UNSCR 1559, which among other things demanded a Syrian exit from Lebanon. Lebanon was one of the Syrian regime's crown jewels, an asset of economic, political, and military import. The loss of Lebanon has strategically weakened President Asad and is a significant accomplishment.

Among other successes has been the indefinite postponement of Syrian entry into a European Union Economic Association Agreement. If the Syrians had managed to gain entry, it would have surely decreased economic pressures on Damascus—a key leverage point against the Baathist state. What's more, U.S. diplomacy has encouraged other international donors, such as the Japanese, from moving ahead on important infrastructure development projects in Syria. The prospect of implementation of additional SAA sanctions also appears to be spooking Western investors. Just last week, Houston-based Marathon Oil indicated it would divest from its Syrian holdings, including contracts worth \$127M. This is not good news for Damascus.

Another positive development on the Syria front has been the emergence of an active and courageous Syrian reform movement. This movement has an important expatriate element, but the advent of this homegrown contingent of reformers, who are every day putting their lives on the line, is an exciting and significant occurrence. The Administration cannot take credit for this development, but the President's support for democracy and freedom in Syria and elsewhere in the region, as well as the pressures on the Baathist regime, have contributed to an atmosphere in Syria where people have been more willing to take chances.

The civil society movement in Syria announced itself in 2000, and was suppressed in 2001, but has reemerged in the past two years, with the publication in October 2005 of the Damascus Declaration, which called for the establishment of a democratic government in Syria, the integration of the Kurds, an end to the emergency law. Then, last month saw the publication of the Beirut-Damascus declaration, which called for an end to Syrian meddling in Lebanon.

What is occurring today appears to be the nascent establishment of a real opposition to the Asad regime. The National Salvation Front (NSF), led by former Syrian Vice President Abdel Halim Khaddam and Syrian Muslim Brotherhood head Sadreddin Bayanouni, which met in London this past weekend is the latest iteration of this opposition. While Khaddam and Bayanouni—a Baathist and Islamist—do not represent the Administration's vision for a democratic, tolerant Syria, there are signs that the Syrian-based opposition may be lending its support to this framework. This alliance in opposition to the Asad regime is no panacea, but it's an important development that has occurred, in part, due to this Administration's policies.

CONTINUED SYRIAN INTRANSIGENCE

Regrettably, despite pressures Syria remains intransigent. Since the implementation of SAA sanctions, Syrian behavior on key issues has seen only incremental changes. On Iraq, Syria reinforced its border and modified visa-entry procedures, making *jihadi* transit a little more difficult. Yet, according to administration officials, insurgent leaders continue to reside in Syrian safe havens orchestrating operations in Iraq. Indeed, in February 2005, then Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee that the Administration had a list of 12 top insurgent leaders residing in Syria. One year later, it would seem apparent that many of these people are still there.

In Lebanon, despite the withdrawal of Syrian troops, Damascus remains a significant player and is suspected of involvement in several post-Hariri political murders and attempted murders. Most prominent among these were journalist Samir Kassir, killed on June 2, 2005, former Communist Party leader George Hawi, killed June 21, 2005, and the attempted assassinations of Defense Minister Elias Murr on July 12, 2005 and new anchor May Chidiac on September 25, 2005. Syria likewise con-

tinues to support Palestinian terrorist organizations, and arms shipments from Tehran to Hezbollah via Damascus transit Syria unmolested. In March, it was widely reported that five truckloads of weapons passed into Lebanon from Syria.

Even after the withdrawal of troops, Syrian intimidation of Lebanese political figures continues. In June 2005, reports surfaced that Syria had developed a "hit list targeting key Lebanese public figures of various political and religious persuasions for assassination." Then, in April 2006, Syria issued warrants for Lebanese MP Walid Jumblatt, his fellow anti-Syrian Druze compatriot Marwan Hamadeh, and *al-Mustaqbal* journalist Fares Khashan, accusing them of "inciting the U.S. administration to occupy Syria," and ordering them to appear before a Syrian military court.

This intimidation extends to the official bilateral relationship, where Syria likewise continues to refuse to establish normalized diplomatic relations with Lebanon, including the setting up of embassies in Beirut and Damascus and the proper exchange of Ambassadors. This past March, Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Sinora tried to travel to Damascus to discuss this issue, but was rebuffed by President Asad. Instead, President Asad dispatched to Beirut Ahmed Jibril—the antiquated leader of the Palestinian terrorist organization Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) to Beirut—as his emissary.

In addition to the PFLP-GC, Syria remains an ardent supporter of Palestinian terrorist organizations Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The top leadership of these organizations continues to reside and operate from Damascus. Islamic Jihad has orchestrated several deadly attacks against Israel from this safe haven in recent months.

And finally, there is the issue of Syria's stance on Washington's Middle East democracy-promotion agenda. In the face of the February 2006 U.S. pledge to provide \$5 million to Syrian reformers, Syria has embarked on a crackdown against civil society, arresting dozens of reformers. One individual of whom the regime has made an example is Kamal Labwani. Labwani was arrested in November 2005 following his return from Washington, where he had met with senior administration officials responsible for democracy promotion. President Bush mentioned Labwani in a speech after his arrest. Four months later, Labwani was charged with crimes that carry the death penalty. The trial starts soon, and Labwani's life hangs in the balance.

CONCLUSION

Based on this behavior, it seems that Syria has been largely un-responsive—if not unrepentant—regarding U.S. demands on the broad range of concerns. In fact, one could make an argument that President Asad and the regime are now seemingly more confident than when the sanctions were initially leveled. Of course, back in 2003 the Syrians were a little more concerned about the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the toppling of their Baathist neighbor to the East, and the prospects that they might be next.

Still, the Syrians have no reason to be sanguine. Although the Syrians claim a reasonable GDP growth rate of 5.5% last year and are benefiting from the high price of oil, according to the IMF, the Syrian economy is facing "daunting challenges," including a dwindling of oil reserves, a high rate of inflation, a bloated and redundant public sector, a high unemployment rate, and a bubble of entrants into the labor market. While the Syrians have tried to engage in economic reforms, far reaching reforms will be difficult to effect, adding internal pressures on the regime.

The short term denouement of all this tension, of course, is the publication in June of the Report of the International Independent Investigation Commission into the Hariri assassination. To date, the Administration has encountered a number of challenges in increasing pressure on Syria to force a change in behavior. Should the report implicate senior Asad regime officials, it will provide a moment of opportunity, for the Administration to work with international allies to force changes. With multilateral cooperation based on UNSCRs, the Administration should be able to leverage severe pressure against Syria and force some change.

There are no guarantees that this report will provide a smoking gun. If it does not, Syria may once again dodge the bullet, and succeed in waiting out yet another Administration. If the report does finger Syria, however, Congress can and should play an important role in working with the Administration to create a legislative framework that will increase pressure on Syria.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, and if it is possible, we will make sure that we can insert it in the record. Thank you.

I would like to ask a question to each of you. How unified is the Syrian Government? How can divisions in the Syrian Government best be exploited to the betterment of the citizens of that area? And

related to that is, which individuals or factions are ready to challenge Asad on a significant level? So how unified is the government, how can the division be exploited to improve the region, and which factions are ready to challenge Asad on a significant level? Thank you.

If we could start with the Ambassador.

Ambassador KATTOUF. Yes, Madam Chair. I have always felt based on service in Syria in three different decades that our knowledge of the internal workings of a regime such as this is very limited. And so it would be a conceit to say that I know who might turn on the char, if anyone.

What I can tell you is that President Bashar al-Asad in my opinion has probably consolidated his hold on power since becoming President. He has had ample time to appoint his own people, his loyalists, to key positions within the security services, the intelligence services, key commands within the military. He had a Ba'ath Party Congress a year ago that—before the Congress, the Minister of Defense Mustufa Klass, who helped put him and his father in power, stepped down the aging defense minister, and he basically humiliated Haddam, the Vice President who was resigning in any case, but he humiliated him at the Ba'ath Party Congress.

So I think that President Bashar al-Asad is in control. Somebody used the word, I think Professor Deed, “coup-proof.” I am not sure any regime is absolutely coup-proof, but that is the goal of the regime's, and you have many overlapping intelligence services reporting directly to the President and the like.

We are seeing certainly ferment in Syria we haven't seen before, and I would note that people are far less afraid to speak out than they were 10 or 15 years ago, despite the arrests. I think unfairness requires them to say that yes, there are plenty of political prisoners in Syria, but Syria is hardly unique in that area, and without naming names there are probably states much friendlier to the United States that have a higher percentage of political prisoners. So people feel freer to speak out than they did in the past, and there is a lot of dissatisfaction being voiced.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you. Mr. Ghadry.

Mr. GHADRY. Yes, thank you. We get the sense that Asad controls, that is true, the army and the intelligence services, and beyond that through policy of fear and intimidation everything else is a toss up. I have to bring to the attention of the Subcommittee that the tribal leaders and the tribal systems in northern Syria are very restless. I also believe that the business community in northern Syria is also not marching too much to the drums of the Syrian state because of the fact that they have lost a lot in economic prosperity to the latest policies of Bashar al-Asad.

So we are seeing and we are watching groups of people, the majority of them northern Syria, trying to vocalize their discontent and their contempt for the government, and I believe that if any—Damascus has never in its history, and it is 8,000 years old, we are told—we have never seen a revolution come out of Damascus. If there is a revolution that will come out of Syria, it will probably come out of northern Syria, either city of Palopas, Alapo, Hama, and I believe that those cities are restless and there are communities within them that have just reached the end of the line.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much.
Professor?

Mr. DEEB. My opinion, because the Syria regime is really, let us face it, it is out of controlled regime. It is a minority of 11 percent controls the country through the intelligence services, through the military, and the security. So in a way a minority could go on controlling the country for a very long time without being accounting for this control, and I think Syria is a good example of that.

But what is helping Syria, as mentioned by Mr. Ghadry, is that its alliance with Iran, which goes back to 1980s, not a new alliance. It is not strategic alliance. It is much deeper. It is a religious alliance. The Alawis consider themselves for some reason they are share practically speaking, but they have—they feel that Iran is really the brew-up against the rest of the Arab and Islamic world, and also because of its militancy. It is not the Iran of the Shah, they are not friendly with the Iran Shah, they are friendly only with the revolution of Iran, because it produces militants, it produced Hezbollah which is a creation of Iran and Syria, a joint venture by the two states, and therefore the Iranian-Syrian axis is a very powerful axis, and I think that is why I pointed out that Hezbollah has to be disarmed which will weaken this axis as such.

So I don't see any challenges really. It is true that there is a lot of discontent, I agree, the greater freedom to speak in Syria, but you know, they run the government. They don't care what happens beyond the security, and they control Damascus by surrounding it by an army which is loyal to the Alawis regime, and I think there is also an element which is very important is that the Syrian regime has always thrived on conflict, and therefore, as pointed out in my work, is that it is not interested at all in resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Contrary to all the statements which the Syrian Government says that it wants peace with Israel, it is not true. It doesn't want the Golan Heights because Golan Heights is back and they lose power, it is better to keep the Golan Heights occupied and stay in power, and the policy has been consistent, and that is why since 1974 consistently, not publicly, not officially, but really undermining the peace process with Palestinians and the Israelis, between whoever wants the peace process they would undermine it, and I think this is a consistent policy of this regime. It thrives on conflict, and thrives, and that is why it finds Iran as an ideal partner in this alliance.

So I don't see really hope within Syria now. As I pointed out the position is quite disunited. The hope is to make the environment around Syria less, you know, sort of congenial to Syria, and Lebanon is the only place because Iraq—whoever wins Iraq, whether the militant Shi'is or the Shi'is who are really in control now are friendly with Syria. I mean, after all they are allies of Iran, and Iran and Syria are allies, and even if God forbid the Sadamists win, Syria has supported them throughout. So whatever happens in Iraq, Syria is a winner.

The real problem for Syria is Lebanon, and their problem is Hezbollah and I think we should be straight on that.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Professor.

Mr. DEEB. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Schenker.

Mr. SCHENKER. Madam Chairwoman. I agree with Ambassador Kattouf. We as a government know very little about the internal workings of the Syrian regime. This is something we are going to have to put more assets into no doubt. What I can say is that the Asad family is like any family. It is dysfunctional, and there appear to be cleavages within that family that the U.S. Government should look to exploit. I don't want to talk about them in particular, but they are out there.

Likewise, there is, as others have noted, social and political ferment in Syrian society. One area to look at would really be the relationship between the regime and the traditional Sunni business elite. There is a longstanding deal between these two groups where the Alawis have the political realm and the military realm and the Sunni leave this along and just deal with the economics.

As the most recent IMF report suggests, Syrian oil revenues and reserves went dry in about 10 years. Currently Syria is reaping a tremendous benefit from the high oil prices, but this will soon end. Likewise, the report notes the high rate of unemployment in Syria and a large bubble soon to enter the market, so all this will add stresses on the regime and stress this traditional relationship. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, and my last question to whoever would like to respond. If you could respond to the reports that there is an effort in Lebanon to create a Sunni, stronger Sunni fundamentalist movement to offset Shi'is fundamentalist instead of taking steps to disarm Hezbollah? Mr. Schenker, we will start with you and anyone who would like to comment.

Mr. SCHENKER. Thank you. There was a recent report in the Lebanese press relating that the Lebanese Government had approved the political party Hizmatarir as a legal political party in Lebanon. I think that is one of the things to which you are referring. Hizmatarir is not on the terrorism list, but is an organization that strongly supports the Caliph, the reestablishment of the Caliphate, and they are thought to be ideologically in line with al-Qaeda, although not operationally.

This is one element that would support the view that Sunnis in Lebanon are concerned and are looking to strengthen Sunni fundamentalism against Hezbollah and Shi'is fundamentalism.

The other element I think to look at would be regarding the disarmament of Palestinians in Lebanon. There is broadspread agreement within the Lebanese Government that Palestinians should be disarmed outside of the camps, and that is an easy decision because everyone can agree on Palestinians in Lebanon.

What the government did not do and what the political leadership engaged in the national dialogue did not agree to do was to disarm Palestinians within the camps, and it is thought that perhaps these Palestinians will constitute some sort of military force potentially against the Shi'is in Lebanon. This is a potential scenario.

The other thing is that there are areas in Lebanon, particularly in northern Lebanon, Akar and others, where you are seeing a stronger presence in al-Qaeda, and this is something that we know

very little about, but I think it is a development to watch in the future.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you. You don't have to comment but if you would like to comment on that.

Mr. DEEB. Yes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Professor?

Mr. DEEB. Yes, I would like to comment on in a sense that it is true there are reports about that, and one has to be worried about it, but on the whole I think the vast majority of the Sunni community will not, of course, support these movements, but there is a tendency, especially with those who were involved in terrorist operations before the withdrawal of Syrian troops, to give them amnesty and all that, and I think it is part of reconciliation as such.

But one should watch this part, and especially among the Palestinians in the camps, they are people who are quite close to al-Qaeda and we have to worry about them, and I think pushing the Lebanese Government to do more about disarming the Palestinians outside the camps and eventually within the camps and giving them more rights in terms of work permits and all that, I think it is the right policy, but still I believe the greatest danger to Lebanese sovereignty is Hezbollah in terms of assessing the whole situation. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you. Mr. Ghadry, only if you want.

Mr. GHADRY. I will pass. I am not an expert on Lebanon.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Ambassador KATTOUF. I will pass as well.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much.

And now I am so pleased to turn to the Ranking Member of our Subcommittee, Mr. Ackerman of New York, for his questions. Thank you, panelists.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I would like to start with a couple of questions to which I would like a numerical answer. The accountability act, how effective has it been thus far on Syrian behavior with zero being zero, and 10 being as much as we can ever expect to get and be 100 percent successful?

Mr. Schenker, you go ahead.

Mr. SCHENKER. Sorry to hear that I am first.

I think it would be difficult to put a number to this.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I know, that is why I asked. [Laughter.]

Just give it a shot.

Mr. SCHENKER. Yes, I think it is—I don't know. I will give it a three. I don't think you have seen—

Mr. ACKERMAN. A three.

Mr. SCHENKER. A three out of 10, 10 being the most.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Yes, Professor?

Mr. DEEB. I think I would agree. I mean, it is probably around three or four, not more than that.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Ghadry?

Mr. GHADRY. I would say closer to seven.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Ambassador Kattouf?

Ambassador KATTOUF. I would say in the two to three range because we already had sanctions on from the 1979 on Syria. While I think it came as a shock to Syria that the Congress acted and

eventually the Administration applied the sanctions, I don't think it has appreciably changed.

Mr. ACKERMAN. The average is 3.75. [Laughter.]

Mr. GHADRY. I am glad to have lifted the average a little.

Mr. ACKERMAN. If we would suppose that the full panoply of sanctions as envisioned as possibilities within the act, within the law were imposed all at once by the Administration, how much of an effect would you take a guess it might have been using the same scale? Ambassador Kattouf?

Ambassador KATTOUF. Sir, the one part of the act that has not been applied that is important is preventing American companies from investing in Syria, but reading the press lately it seems to me that—

Mr. ACKERMAN. Well, without speculating the possibility of it ever happening, because it may never happen.

Ambassador KATTOUF. Right.

Mr. ACKERMAN. And it may happen this afternoon.

Ambassador KATTOUF. Right.

Mr. ACKERMAN. So let us assume it all happens.

Ambassador KATTOUF. Okay, if it all happens, basically American companies have already divested themselves of significant investments in Syria, and there are some parts of the act, and I don't want to have to explain further that I think it would be counter-productive if they were implemented.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Well, give me a number. If everything were implemented whether you think they are good, bad or indifferent how effective would it be, zero to 10?

Ambassador KATTOUF. It would still be around two to three.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Ghadry.

Mr. GHADRY. I believe the importance of the act is the intent and the willingness of the American public and the American people to stand up for what is right. I believe the effect is still high. I still believe a seven, but I also believe that it has missing components and that—

Mr. ACKERMAN. So you believe if we did the full panoply, like the Ambassador, it wouldn't go up in your estimation the effectiveness.

Professor Deeb?

Mr. DEEB. Yes. Definitely go up, but you know, we have to look at two environments: The internal environment, I don't think the regime would change really in any kind of action, but its reputation beyond its borders would be affected, and this is important, and therefore more people would be critical of Syria, less countries would be interested in being friendly to Syria, and I think this is important, and isolate the regime much more. So I will give it a higher ranking than three and four. I would go up higher, perhaps six.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Okay. Mr. Schenker?

Mr. SCHENKER. My number would remain the same. I agree with Ambassador Kattouf for the reasons that I also would not want to express here, that I think that full implementation of all these sanctions would not be in our interest. That said, the number would go up dramatically, maybe doubled if we got some international support, you know, post-Brammertz Report. I think that

if we get an international coalition that you can get an eight out of this. You could really tort the pressure.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mixed reviews. Some people think it doesn't change the effectiveness, doesn't change the effect on behavior at all, some people think it goes up as much as double what they projected which was low to begin with.

Let us talk to the issue that you just brought up, Mr. Schenker, and that is some other Arab support. If we were looking for a coalition within the region, what would be country one, two and three, in that order, that we should look to to be part of that coalition as a practical matter?

Mr. SCHENKER. Well, in my comments before I was referring more so to European support which I think really puts the economic squeeze to Syria. That said, you are going to have a hard time, I think, getting a lot of Arab states on board for this.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I just want three.

Mr. SCHENKER. Our traditional allies would be Egypt, Jordan. Egypt, I think, would be sensitive to coming out against the public for obvious reasons. Jordan is on the board and has—

Mr. ACKERMAN. It depends on who is running in Egypt.

Mr. SCHENKER. Right. Perhaps. I think at this point in time that you would have some difficulties just because of what the transition looks like in Egypt. That said, I think you would have who has borne a lot of the brunt of Syrian misbehavior take a somewhat supportive role, but i would have a hard time naming three.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Professor.

Mr. DEEB. I think definitely Jordan would work against Syria if this is what is meant by the question, but when it comes to Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabia is difficult to assess its position, but because Hariri is involved, because Hariri had dual nationality, because of the connection Hariri had in Saudi Arabia, I think it is very important that Saudi Arabia would be very much against any kind of—in favor of what we do against Syria and will not go against the policies which we pursue against Syria, in my opinion.

Egypt is less involved, only supported Syria somehow, and I don't think it will come to full support our position.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Ghadry.

Mr. GHADRY. I would surround Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. Iraq would be the most difficult, but I think if you surround Syria strategically, that would have an impact, psychological impact on Syria.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Ambassador Kattouf?

Ambassador KATTOUF. Yes, sir. I know you want three countries but let me just preface it by saying at the end of March there was an Arab summit in Khartoum, and Hezbollah indirectly was on the agenda in terms of whether it would be allotted as a resistance organization by name, and Siniora, the prime minister in Lebanon, who would like to have 1559 fully implemented was there, as was President Lahhoud, of course in a close relationship with Syria.

Basically Siniora was isolated, and even those who I am sure sympathized with Siniora and with the idea that Hezbollah should be disarmed ended up voting with the majority.

But if I had to say, I would say countries like Jordan, Kuwait. I don't think the gulf states are always wild about Syria's policies in Lebanon.

Mr. ACKERMAN. If I might indulge just one further question, Madam Chair.

If what we have here is a consensus that the sanctions haven't had as large an effect as we would like for them to have had so far, if all were imposed, there doesn't seem to be enthusiastic support that would greatly affect Syrian behavior anyway, and there is nobody that is enthusiastically suggesting that any of the front line or neighboring states would be jumping and chomping at the bit to help us here, what would be the one single thing that you think we could do that would affect Syrian behavior? And just if you could keep it very brief.

Ambassador KATTOUF. Sir, I think we already gave a demonstration of that within the UN Security Council in the wake of Hariri's assassination. You know, called on Syria to implement 1559 and get out, and we had the support of the EU, and Saudi Arabia—

Mr. ACKERMAN. So your suggestion is having the UN resolution asking them to behave?

Ambassador KATTOUF. Well, I think basically you have to do it, you have to have wider support. Syria is not happy that the EU has not signed a cooperative agreement with it. The Chair referred to the WMD issue and now there are human rights issues. The European Parliament is not enthusiastic about going ahead. Those are the kinds of things that have the greatest effect on Syria. When they see that the United States policy is in concert with other principal actors, at that point, as you pointed out, they only can fall back on Iran.

Mr. ACKERMAN. So the strongest move we could make is a UN resolution?

Ambassador KATTOUF. The strongest move we can make is to get as much consensus as possible on implementing current UN resolutions and waiting to see what the Brammertz Report says.

Mr. ACKERMAN. So we would ask for more words to enforce our words?

Ambassador KATTOUF. Yes, we need others too—we alone cannot do it, in my opinion.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Ghadry.

Mr. GHADRY. Yes, Mr. Ackerman. This is an excellent question, and I have to ask, I have to say that you have had conditions in SALSA that actually protected the Syrian people, specifically in regard to sanctions for food and medicine. I think if you amend SALSA to move toward taking care of the Syrian people inside and looking for their well-being, I think you will put a tremendous pressure on the regime, and that has been the missing component, and that is why my recommendation that I made were to actually call for democracy and freedom for the Syrian people, to actually call to rescinding some of the laws, to lifting the emergency laws in Syria. Then you would bring the Syrian people to your side. Once you do that the pressure will be tremendously immense on the system.

Yes, there are all kinds of pressure you can bring from outside with our allies, and United Nations, but I think if you amended

SALSA to actually appeal to the Syrian people, to their plight and to the human rights conditions inside Syria, you would go a long way in putting a lot of pressure on the regime, and the regime will have no excuse whatsoever, and the Syrian people realize that this body and the American people are on their side.

Mr. ACKERMAN. So you would ferment discontent from within?

Mr. GHADRY. Correct.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Professor?

Mr. DEEB. I agree with Professor Kattouf, with Ambassador Kattouf as well as Mr. Ghadry in terms of the first point is that going through the United Nations is very important, and in fact the resolution of the United Nations are so important in the region and in the past, for example, everybody who wants to be critical of Syria, they can use their international community—legitimacy, international legitimacy as a shield to fight Syria, and I think it is very, very important.

I agree also with Mr. Ghadry about the sensitivity when sanctions are applied so that the Syrian people will not suffer because we have to get the Syrian people on our side, and the regime is quite an isolated regime, and I think this is the best way of approaching it.

But still the UN is absolutely important, and of course, the European Community is part of it. It would get more and more international support. Of course, United States effort, but channeled through international sort of ways I think is the best way of being effective with Syria.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Schenker?

Mr. SCHENKER. Sir, in my opinion, unilateral sanctions are seldom really effective. I think we have to go multilateral. I think we have to partner with the EU, and I think we have to do what Syria fears the most, which is to work with our partners to economically and politically isolate the state.

As a second point, I would say something additionally that we can do to really put the pressure on Syria would be to succeed in Iraq. A democratic, pro-West Iraq would, I think surround Syria and be strategically the worst thing that could possibly happen to Asad and the regime.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Mr. ACKERMAN. So the consensus is then, it would seem, some type of international condemnation and sanctions by the United Nations attached to an oil for food kind of program for the people.

Mr. GHADRY. Similar fashion.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I wonder how that is going to work.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Well, I give Mr. Ackerman a 10 for his questions; managed to get a lot of numbers in there.

I just have one last question, and then we will hear from Mr. Ackerman if he has another question for our panelists.

In my opening statement, I had said that I see Syria today as where Iran was 10 years ago. What lessons have we learned in our approach to Iran that we should apply or we should not apply, what mistakes should we avoid with Syria? What are the lessons learned that we can apply from Iran to Syria? Do you see anything at all? Whoever would like to start. Mr. Ghadry.

Mr. GHADRY. Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to, you know, very quickly respond to this question by saying that one of the issues that comes to mind right away is the fact that we don't seem, and I am speaking and putting my American hat here on, we don't seem to pursue the policies we need with countries that are working against the interests of the United States in a very consistent fashion.

I have to say to you that as a Syrian, if I am fighting a much bigger country, and if I feel that that country is inconsistent, hesitant, not really determined, then I am strengthened by that fact, and I will push further, and I will become more violent, and I will pursue more policies that are just more adamant toward violence and toward terrorism.

So I have to say that I think one of the lessons we need to learn is that we have got to be consistent with Syria. If we are really—we have a hard line against Syria, we have to be consistent on that score. We always have to be pursuing that same line so that the Syrians don't feel, or the regime in Syria, not the Syrians, but the regime in Syria doesn't feel emboldened by the lack of consistency and by the lack of resolve on our part.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Very good. Thank you.

Mr. Schenker?

Mr. SCHENKER. Just one short comment. I am not an Iran specialist, but I can tell you that it is my understanding that Iran neither fears nor respects the United States. Iranian terrorists killed Americans, and I think what we can take away from this after our years in dealing with these people is that blandishment does not work. We have to be serious.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much.

I will turn for the last round of questions to Mr. Ackerman, if you have any.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you, Chair.

The economic stability of Syria is shaky at best, and I suppose one of the reasons that the regime family holds on is because of the Golan issue, and the common enemy and something to fight for theory. I think it is almost—well, if one could conceive the far-fetched notion of Israel deciding by dawn to turn the Golan over to Syria, some might come to the conclusion that getting their wish to come true. The Syrians would have no other motive for staying in power absent their ability to improve their economy.

People would focus more on the internal problems that they have, and that fermenting problems would not probably need a lot of encouragement from the outside.

The other thing is the Syrians seem to have depended in large measure in their economy on getting very cheap oil from Iraq and selling it at a rather substantial markup. That doesn't seem to be happening lately.

How long can they hold on before an economic collapse? And that is my last question.

Ambassador KATTOUF. Congressman, pursuant to your first question, I think it is perceptive and implicitly suggesting that Syrians almost across the board want to see the restoration of Syrian sovereignty on the Golan. So it is a big issue and it is one that the regime can and does exploit because the national feeling is there. It is undeniable.

Therefore, if we had a settlement, if we had a settlement that allowed Syrians to feel that their honor had been restored, much in the way the Egyptians feel it has, then the regime would have no reason, no possible pretext to maintain emergency laws and security courts, and all the restrictions that now apply. I am not saying they would lift them. I am just saying that people would say what the hell is going on? Why are we having—you know, we have got the Golan back. So I think that plays into it.

Indeed, part of the reason that we engaged with Syria so much in the 1990s is because we thought all the issues that concerned us bilaterally with the Syrians or almost all the issues could be solved in the context of an Arab-Israeli dispute. I mean, inconceivably Israel would allow Syria to sign a peace treaty that would still leave Hezbollah armed, Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Damascus, you know, WMD programs active and the like. That just wouldn't have happened.

So at least as far as the first question is concerned, I think it would have a tremendous impact on events inside the country.

As far as how long Syria can muddle through, they have been muddling through for decades. The economy has never been any great shakes. Agriculture has been fairly good in recent years. Tourism, Arab tourism has been pretty good. Syria actually has a lot of Iraqis. They welcome the Iraqis, and the Iraqis have been treated quite well, and presumably have brought money with them and are putting it in real estate and putting it into businesses and the like.

So while Syria's oil is running out, and they do have a huge Jute population, I cannot put a year on when the economy will "collapse."

Mr. GHADRY. First of all, Congressman Ackerman, the issue of the Golan Heights is an issue that has been used by Syria for quite sometime to create fervor and create following in the population saying that we are the protector and we are the ones that are going to bring back the Golan, and that has usually rallied the people behind the government because they are the saviors, et cetera, and I think that issue have diminished somewhat in the last 3 years, and we have seen the rise of anti-Americanism inside Syria.

So I think if the Syrians have the chance to date to actually sit down with Israel and strike a deal to return the Golan Heights, I think they will do that because I think they have another excuse now. They can tap into readily in case they want to rally the troops or rally the public behind them.

On the issue of the economy, it is very hard to predict when it will collapse. I think there are some very smart people who kind of monitored the history of 60 other countries.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I will just note that this is the second "when it will collapse" that I have heard.

Mr. GHADRY. When it will collapse.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I didn't hear "if it will collapse."

Mr. GHADRY. I see, when it will collapse. It is very hard to predict. We cannot predict that question, but we know that out of 300,000 students every year that come out of universities only 100,000 find jobs, and that is not going to last too long. This will

put pressure on the system, and eventually may collapse the system.

Mr. DEEB. Concerning the Golan Heights and the peace process, of course, one should look at history. When Yitzhak Rabin, Prime Minister of Israel, offered practically all the Golan Heights in August 1993, and Syria anyway rejected it because, you know, it removed a major cause which the Asam regime in its opinion keeps it in power.

With respect to the oil, I mean, Iran, Iran gives it subsidized oil. It is no problem. Eventually whatever it needs from Iran, Iran would provide them. I mean, they have a wonderful alliance. The first country, non-Arab country Bashar al-Asad visited after he came to power was Iran, and you know, probably one of the first countries Ahmadinejad visited when he came to power was Syria. So I mean they are comfortable with that.

But still I think the problems of unemployment, young people graduating from universities, all of that is a big problem, but the regime can go on for awhile, maybe 10–15 years, perhaps not more than that, but I give it at least one decade I believe it will survive.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I don't think you can predict any signs of a period of economic collapse. I will start with the Golan issue though. I am of the mind that the Daniel Pipe's argument is essentially right on this; that the regime needs the issue of the Golan to maintain the internal oppression of the people of Syria. Once Golan is solved, the regime is gone, and I think that is the case. I don't think it is provable, but that is how I see the situation.

Syria last year had something like a 5.5 percent growth rate. It didn't match population rate, but it is pretty good. At the same time the regime of Asad is not doing anything in terms of social reforms, but certainly they are focused on some elements of economic reform. In that regard, they brought in a number of open banks, and Western style accounting, things like this, that are new developments, and I think this is in the plus category for the economy.

At the same time if the regime really wants to move forward with true economic reform, it is going to result in a lot of dislocation. The public sector will release people, people will be fired and this will add to the economic problems of the state. You do have high unemployment. You do have the bubble entering. So I think in 10 years after the oil runs out and if oil prices suddenly go down, they are going to feel a little bit more pain, but the economy is not going to collapse anytime soon, my summation.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much.

Thank you to the panelists. You know, this morning we heard—we were in a joint session of Congress. We heard from the Latvian President, and it was interesting to hear her. She was in exile for many years while her country was suffering under the yoke of repressive Communist ideology, and she said one of the things that united the Latvian people was their hope, the hope that the world would not ignore them, that the world would not shun them, and that the world would come together to fight for its freedom, and here she was today addressing Members of Congress and Members of the Senate saying democracy is alive and well in Latvia, and our

hope is that democracy will one day come for the long-suffering people of Syria.

Thank you so much for all of you being here. Excellent testimony, and thank you to my friend Gary Ackerman always.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. The Subcommittee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:08 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

