

Mr. President, November 11 is their special day. It is for this reason that during the years in which it was my privilege to serve as the majority leader of the U.S. Senate, I was always determined that this legislative body would not be in session on this most important and symbolic date. I always wanted to make sure that my colleagues and I had the opportunity to take part in the many ceremonies that take place on this day in honor of the courage and the sacrifice of America's veterans. I always wanted to make sure that this Chamber paid proper homage to the men and women to whom we owe so much.

Writing about the thousands of soldiers who lost their lives during the bloody battle at Antietam, Civil War historian, Bruce Catton, pointed out that these men did not die for a few feet of a cornfield or a rocky hill; they died that this country might be permitted to go on, and that it might be permitted to fulfill the great hope of our Founding Fathers.

So may it be said of most every person who has worn our Nation's uniform. These people served and they sacrificed to permit this country to go on to fulfill the great hope of our Founding Fathers. And it is proper and it is right that we take one day a year to pay our most profound respect to the men and the women who have worn our Nation's uniform, and to thank them.

I thank them and we here in the Senate thank them on this day for what they have given, for what they have sacrificed, and for their love of country.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is now closed.

The Senator from Pennsylvania is recognized.

SYRIA ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, on behalf of the majority leader, I call up the Syria Accountability Act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will state the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1828) to halt Syrian support for terrorism, end its occupation of Lebanon, stop its development of weapons of mass destruction, cease its illegal importation of Iraqi oil and illegal shipments of weapons and other military items to Iraq, and by so doing hold Syria accountable for the serious international security problems it has caused in the Middle East, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time for debate is limited to 90 minutes, with 30 minutes under the control of the Senator from Indiana, Mr. LUGAR, or his designee, 30 minutes under the control of the Senator from Delaware, Mr. BIDEN, or his designee, and 30 min-

utes under the control of the Senator from Pennsylvania, Mr. SPECTER.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, there is before the Senate the so-called Syrian Accountability Act, which imposes sanctions on Syria. It recites a long list of circumstances where the Syrians have not taken sufficient action to fight terrorism, and then it calls for Syria to take corrective action, and in the absence of that corrective action, authorizes the imposition of economic sanctions, and it leaves with the President of the United States the authority to waive those sanctions if it is in the national interest.

Sanctions are imposed by Congress with some frequency. At first blush, this appears to be a straightforward affirmative vote, but I believe the matter is more complicated than that, and I have come to that view after having traveled to Syria almost every year since 1984, and after having had considerable contact with the Syrian Government. After considering the matter at some length, I have decided that I will vote in favor of the Syrian Accountability Act because the problems of terrorism are so serious and because I believe that Syria needs to do more.

The bill itself has a long recitation of background circumstances, but the events today in Iraq, where our fighting men and women are being subjected to terrorist attacks, casualties and fatalities, and where the people of Iraq are being subjected as victims of terrorism, I believe it is a fair demand that more be done. That would include more by Syria.

There are, according to reliable reports, official statements of the U.S. Government that terrorists are infiltrating into Syria, coming from Syria into Iraq. More has to be done on that subject.

It has to be noted that Syria has responded with a number of affirmative actions to be of assistance to the United States in our war on terrorists. The officials of the State Department have acknowledged that after September 11, 2001, that information was provided by Syria on al-Qaeda, which saved U.S. lives.

It is also to be acknowledged there has been some improvement on the Syrian-Iraqi border, but clearly not enough. There were reports just this morning from the State Department about the porous Syrian border and terrorists coming into Iraq, again exposing U.S. personnel and the Iraqis themselves to terrorist attack.

It ought to be noted that Syria did join in the unanimous resolution, U.N. Resolution 1511, and that when Secretary of State Powell traveled to Syria in April of 2002, there was some helpful action taken by the Syrian Government on the southern border of Lebanon. But when Secretary of State Powell went to Syria in May of 2003 and urged the Syrian Government to oust the terrorists from Damascus, that request was not acted upon. Recently, Israel moved against terrorist

training camps within a few miles of Damascus.

While all of these matters are subjected to controversy, and there are disputes by the Syrian Government, I believe the balance of the evidence supports the conclusion that those were training camps.

I believe it is important that the U.S. Government continues in its efforts to negotiate with Syria to try to improve the situation, and that we ought to be mindful that there are opportunities to have frank discussions with the Syrian officials which have led to some beneficial results and which ought to be pursued.

I urge my colleagues in the U.S. Congress, pursuant to our duties, for example, on the Foreign Operations Subcommittee on which I serve, or on the Foreign Relations Committee, to travel to Syria to engage the Syrian leaders because I think it can be productive. I make reference to my own experience in that regard.

I made my first trip to Syria in 1984. As I have said, I have been to Syria almost every year since. I first met President Bashar al-Assad in January of 1988 and found him to be willing to listen and willing to have a dialog. My conversation at that time with President Assad lasted for some 4 hours and 35 minutes, talking about a wide range of issues—the Israeli-Syrian relations, the Iran-Iraq war, which was still in progress at that time, U.S.-Syrian relations, the situations with the Jews in Syria. At that time, working with then Congressman Solarz, I urged President Assad to allow the Jews to have free immigration out of Syria. There were many Jewish women in Syria who could not find husbands of the Jewish faith. President Assad said to me, in one of our meetings, he would release any Jewish woman where somebody came from the United States—there were large Syrian-Jewish groupings in the United States—to come to claim a bride, and anyone who wanted to marry a woman in Syria who was Jewish, if a suitor came, the woman would be released.

I reported back to a number of Jewish-Syrian enclaves in the United States. Nothing much happened about that. Finally, a few years later, President Assad granted free rights for the Jews to leave Syria at their choice, something he had resisted, but something which he finally was persuaded to do.

During the course of the discussions I had with President Assad, I urged him to participate in discussions with Israel. At first, he took the position he would not be a party to any discussions which were sponsored just by the United States but only if they were sponsored by all five of the permanent members of the Security Council.

Finally, President Assad made a change and sent representatives to Madrid in 1991 to participate in those discussions. When Prime Minister Netanyahu was elected in 1996, Prime