

Syrian Accountability Act gaining so much support, it is my hope that your Government will respond to the concerns outlined in this letter before the U.S. Government resorts to sanctions.

I call these matters to your personal attention with the hope that prompt action can be taken by Syria to resolve these problems. The United States greatly appreciated the help that Syria provided to our intelligence services after September 11, 2001 in our flight against el-Qaeda.

Sincerely,

ARLEN SPECTER.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 12:30 and additional time having expired, we will stand in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:53 p.m., recessed until 2:16 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. VOINOVICH).

SYRIA ACCOUNTABILITY ACT— Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I am pleased that the Senate soon will be taking action on the Syria Accountability Act. Much work has been devoted to this legislation, and I believe that we are ready to pass the bill. I would like to thank the majority leader for his support of this bill and the process that led to it. I also would like to thank Senators SANTORUM and BOXER for their commitment to this bill and their bipartisan cooperation in reaching agreement of an important amendment. A critical component of this amendment provides the President with the ability to calibrate U.S. sanctions against Syria in response to positive Syrian behavior when such adjustment is in the national security interests of the United States.

On October 30, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held an excellent hearing on U.S. relations with Syria. Among other witnesses, we heard from William Burns, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, and Ambassador Cofer Black, the Counter-Terrorism Coordinator.

These hearings underscored the difficulties presented by recent Syrian behavior. Hopes that reform could take root in Syria after the fall of Saddam Hussein have dimmed considerably. Instead, tensions have increased between the United States and Syria, and a cycle of retaliation and revenge has derailed possible progress in the "Road Map" to peace for Israelis and Palestinians. The Israeli retaliatory attack on an Islamic Jihad terrorist camp in Syria has underscored that the "no war and no peace" status quo in the region cannot be taken for granted.

Many experts thought that when President Bashar al-Assad replaced his father 3 years ago, he would adopt a more pragmatic approach to negotiations with Israel and to internal polit-

ical and economic reforms. Syrian cooperation with the United States in relation to al-Qaida terrorists held promise for cooperation in other areas. Assistant Secretary Burns noted last June in Congressional testimony that "the cooperation the Syrians have provided in their own self-interest on al-Qaida has saved American lives."

But Syria's subsequent failure to stop terrorist groups, including Hezbollah, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, from using Syria as a base for training and planning suicide bombings in Israel has continued. Syria also has failed to withdraw its forces from Lebanon or take concrete steps in support of the Road Map peace plan. It reportedly has continued to maintain stockpiles of chemical weapons and to pursue development of lethal biological agents.

Moreover, Syria is working against the U.S. and Coalition forces in Iraq by refusing to release assets in Syrian accounts that Saddam Hussein's regime stole from the Iraqi people.

These and other Syrian transgressions have led both Houses of the U.S. Congress to support the bill before us today, which stiffens the economic and diplomatic sanctions already imposed on Damascus for being a state sponsor of terrorism. I support this bill, which is based on the presumption that modifying Syria's behavior requires a tough response. But as we give the administration additional sticks to use against Syria, we should be careful about restricting our government's flexibility in responding to new diplomatic opportunities. Syria has shown the ability to make better choices—for example, supporting U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441 in November 2002, which held Iraq in "material breach" of its disarmament obligations and voting for the more recent Resolution 1511, which calls upon all nations to support the U.S.-led effort in Iraq. I believe the amendment to this bill provides the President with the necessary flexibility.

Even as we tighten restrictions on Syria, we should be emphasizing to the Syrians why it is in their interest to recalculate their approach towards the United States. Syria shares a 400-mile border with Iraq. With more than 135,000 U.S. troops deployed in Iraq, Syria needs to reconsider where its future security interests lie. This is not a threat of U.S. military action but a statement of the new reality on Syria's borders. Moreover, Syrian forces that continue to occupy Lebanon are draining the Syrian economy while providing few positive returns. Continued Syrian occupation of Lebanon invites further possible military action from Israel.

The Syrian leadership also must adjust to the end of its "under the counter" oil deals with Saddam Hussein. Syria must negotiate new and transparent arrangements to meet its energy needs. Syria's economy will not thrive without opening up to investment and trade, particularly with Iraq.

Significant benefits could accrue to Syria from an economically vibrant Iraqi trading partner, increased trade with Europe and the United States, and even possible membership in a Middle East Free Trade Agreement down the road.

In this context, Syria may find motivation to return to the negotiating table. An agreement on the Golan Heights that would provide security guarantees for Israel while respecting Syria's sovereignty could be the key to resolving a host of other problems, including Syria's occupation of Lebanon, its support of Palestinian terror groups, and its economic and political isolation. Although success of such an agreement would depend ultimately on the parties themselves, the United States must seek to leverage obvious Syrian interests in pursuit of a viable settlement.

The Syrian regime has some difficult choices to make. It can continue to harbor and support groups devoted to terror, or it can act in ways that will help restore stability and peace in the region and thereby create a better economic future for its people. It cannot do both. This bill, as amended, adds to the tools available to the President to move Syria toward a more responsible course. I commend the bill to the Senate and hope that we will pass it by a strong vote.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DASCHLE. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I wanted to come to the floor to express my strong support for the Syria Accountability Act. I commend the distinguished chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for his leadership and the efforts he has made on this legislation to bring us to this point. Let me also thank my colleague from California, Senator BOXER, for her tireless and effective advocacy of this legislation. I am very pleased this legislation is now pending. I congratulate my colleagues as well as others who have made the effort to bring us to a point where I believe on a strong bipartisan basis this legislation will pass this afternoon.

This day has been a long time coming. We have heard administration officials argue that this straightforward response to the behavior of the Syrian Government reduces the President's flexibility to deal with the "bigger picture." We believe that it is not only morally right, but will actually strengthen the President's hand in explaining the "big picture" to the Syrians.

Had our years of entreaties to the Syrians not fallen on deaf ears, and had promises from Syria over the last several years not turned out to be little