

U.S. POLICY TOWARD SYRIA

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE

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U.S. POLICY TOWARD SYRIA

THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 2013

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:17 p.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Robert Menendez (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Menendez, Casey, Cardin, Kaine, Udall, Corker, Rubio, Johnson, McCain, and Paul.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY

The CHAIRMAN. Good afternoon. This hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

We appreciate all of our witnesses who are here, and I especially want to appreciate Ambassador Ford's extraordinary effort to join us today, having come from the Syria meeting in London, I believe, directly here. We appreciate our three panelists who will help us unravel some of the complexities and implications of what has become a dangerous sectarian war that has already taken the lives of more than 70,000 Syrians and displaced at least 4 million more, according to the United Nations.

I hope our witnesses can pay particular attention to the implications of this massive humanitarian tragedy and shed more light on the options that we have, if any, for a more active, assertive American leadership role.

This does not mean throwing ourselves into the middle of a very complicated and dangerous sectarian war. None of us want to do that. But it does mean looking at every option for the United States to play a leading role in a coordinated international response that comes with a clearly articulated strategy that our partners in the Middle East and around the world can support.

That said, Syria is more than just a humanitarian tragedy. Serious U.S. interests are at stake and they cannot be ignored. Large chemical weapons stockpiles could fall into the wrong hands or be used by the Assad regime against its own people. Extremist groups could destroy the possibility of a stable post-Assad Syria. The Syrian state could collapse leaving a safe haven for terrorists sitting in Israel's border, constituting a new threat to the region with broader implications for our own security. The refugee crisis and sectarian violence could worsen and spread instability not only to Jordan and Lebanon, but to Iraq and Turkey.

We are all hoping for a quick end to the Assad regime which would mean an end to Iran's closest ally in the Middle East, but we cannot allow Assad then to trigger more instability in an already turbulent region.

So the basic question I hope we can explore today is this. Given the realities on the ground in Syria, what exactly do we do? What are our options?

First, we are already providing \$385 million in humanitarian support to Syria, but even in this difficult fiscal climate, we could dramatically increase that number to help end the suffering of the Syrian people caught in one of the most devastating humanitarian tragedies the region has seen. Just last week, the United Nations said that the humanitarian crisis had escalated so dramatically in recent months that the relief effort was now broken. An increase in aid would signal to other donor nations that this is not business as usual, that there is too much at stake to allow a failed Syrian state to cause more suffering and destabilize the region further.

Second, we need to find ways to cut off the Assad regime's economic lifelines from Moscow and Tehran. Russia and Iran must both know that there will be economic consequences for their continued support of a regime that is committing horrific atrocities against its own people.

Third, we must increase support for the Syrian Opposition Coalition and other groups inside Syria that we are confident share our fundamental values and interests. We need to continue to identify these groups and directly provide them with the nonlethal aid we have already been sending them, and we need to assist them in setting up governing institutions that are a clear alternative to Assad.

But for my own view, looking at the situation as it exists, I believe the time has come to consider providing in some form military aid to the opposition because unless we change the dynamic and put our finger on the scales to change the tipping point, Assad will continue to believe he can hold on to power. If he can have a monopoly in the skies and in artillery, he will probably believe that he can continue indefinitely.

And so it should include, in my mind, weapons, but stop short of those weapons that could threaten our own interests if they fall into the wrong hands like shoulder-fired missiles. We learned that lesson in Afghanistan the first time around. We should not make that same mistake again.

We should also be providing training, both tactical, strategic, and otherwise, to improve the fighting capacity of the friendly opposition forces we identify, as well as possibly share intelligence in terms of where Syrians' assets are so that they can more strategically be able to pursue their fight. That will not only help in the struggle to end the atrocities, it will also help us in establishing working relationships with the future leaders of Syria.

If we take these bold steps, publicly and forcefully with the support of our allies, we will send a strong signal to key Middle Eastern and European partners that they should get behind a joint effort, a signal to countries like Iraq that it is time to get behind the international community and cut off the supply lines that stretch from Tehran to Damascus across Iraq. And it will send a

strong signal to Assad and his Russian and Iranian allies that efforts to keep him in power will be in vain.

In the weeks ahead, I plan to introduce legislation that reflects this strategy, and I look forward to discussing the elements of it today with our two panels.

For our first panel, we have three distinguished witnesses. Robert Ford is the U.S. Ambassador to Syria. Elizabeth Jones is the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, and Daniel Glaser is the Assistant Secretary of Treasury for Terrorist Financing.

And before we hear from them, I would like to call upon my distinguished colleague, the ranking member, Senator Corker.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BOB CORKER,
U.S. SENATOR FROM TENNESSEE**

Senator CORKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank Ambassador Ford, Ambassador Jones, and Secretary Glaser for coming today.

I think sometimes we forget about the tremendous public service that people provide for our country, and today I was glad, at lunch, that Republicans and Democrats honored John McCain for his extraordinary service and the celebration of him being released from a prisoner-of-war camp, the Hanoi Hilton, 40 years ago. So, John, that was an outstanding experience, and I thank you for your character and for sharing all that with us today. It was truly moving I think to all of us.

And I think it was the first time we have had a Republican and Democratic lunch since I have been here. So thank you for bringing us together in that way.

The CHAIRMAN. And we paid.

Senator CORKER. And you all paid. That is right. [Laughter.]

I recognize that we really have no good options available to us in Syria, and I really do not want to debate, although if people want to discuss it, I think that is fine, how we might have acted and along what lines in what has been a challenging environment. Instead, I would like for us to focus, if we could, today on the way forward. And I know that the chairman has indicated he has some plans of his own.

We really do not have a good idea of where the President is headed on policy toward Syria. It feels to me as if we wake up and the events in Syria determine the next stop gap, almost to show that we are involved but not really that involved. And so I hope today that our panelists will help us understand where the President is headed on Syria policy.

So far, as I mentioned, we have been in a reaction mode and the administration's response appears to be ad hoc, consisting of moving funds for unanticipated emergencies or even when it comes to supporting opposition forces and groups with nonlethal aid.

I understand the limitations and restrictions that have contributed to that approach. I really do. But I think it is reasonable now to say that we cannot or should not be in an unanticipated emergency mode any longer. This is now going into its third year.

So I hope today we will be illuminated by the administration in stating what are our goals, what principles guide our decisions,

what are our parameters for growing our involvement there. Do we have redlines or limits? Do we have conditions based on cooperation from our allies? Do we have a realistic timeline? How do we know the partners we have chosen are credible and reliable? What resources and what authorization does the President believe he needs?

Without these clear objectives, principles, or parameters, events might pull us into a very dangerous circumstance where we have too little control or where we miss a critical opening to do what is necessary. I can imagine that events such as the use of chemical weapons, violent extremists seizing control of the country, extremists gaining possession of chemical weapons or even humanitarian concerns could drive our policy into deeper involvement. I am also concerned, though, that we could overestimate the value and underestimate the difficulty of a limited military involvement such as a no-fly zone.

There is a clear humanitarian imperative to bring Assad's barbaric violence to an end, but there are long-term challenges in Syria that we cannot solve with a quick military fix. While we may have little control over events in Syria, we do have control over our own decisionmaking process for foreign assistance and for involvement in a war.

Earlier this week, I sent a letter to the President noting the constitutional role of Congress in such decisions and my expectation that major changes or engagements can lawfully proceed only with Congress. I am not saying that I would, or would not, support greater involvement but that he should not do so in such a way as to clearly avoid Congress' role, as was the case in Libya and has been the case thus far with Syria.

Specifically, I am very interested in what our preparations are for the day after the Assad regime falls, as it eventually will, we all hope. As we are making preparations for allies in the region, are we preparing for the chaos of possible explosion of sectarian violence that may explode among opposition groups when they lose their common enemy, and if we are preparing for these eventualities, how are we doing so?

I look forward to your testimony today, and I thank you for your service.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Corker.

And let me just take a moment to join you and say that I want to thank Senator McCain as well in this joint caucus that we had. I have had the privilege now of serving here 7 years with Senator McCain, and I had never heard—I knew elements of it, but I had never heard those riveting stories about your time in captivity and capture in the Vietnam war and the incredible human spirit that comes through in even your description of some of the most harrowing and difficult times in your life. And it was really enlightening to me in so many ways and uplifting to me in so many ways. So I appreciate your sharing it with all of us on both sides of the aisle, and I salute you as an extraordinary American who I have the privilege of serving with.

Senator MCCAIN. I thank the chairman. And I also would remind him that I appreciate, ahead of time, him forgiving me for any aggravation I may cause. I thank the chairman. [Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. This committee is all about diplomacy. [Laughter.]

So with that, let me recognize Secretary Jones and then Ambassador Ford and then Secretary Glaser.

STATEMENT OF HON. ELIZABETH JONES, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Ambassador JONES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, members of the committee. Thank you for inviting us to present an overview of our policy to promote political transition in Syria.

I ask that my written statement be included in the record.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection.

Ambassador JONES. February marked 2 years since Syrian protesters took peacefully to the streets to seek basic rights and protections from their government, like others throughout the region. What started out as a peaceful demand for dignity and freedom has become one of the most devastating conflicts of the 21st century.

As you noted, Mr. Chairman, Syrian civilians face an unprecedented level of ruthlessness from the Assad regime. Every day, the regime targets residential neighborhoods with heavy weapons, short-range ballistic missiles, cluster bombs, surface-to-surface missiles, including Scuds. March was the deadliest month of the conflict with over 6,000 Syrians killed. More than 70,000 Syrians have been killed since the beginning of the conflict, and the number is rising as the fighting in Damascus and southern Syria intensifies. Three to four million people are now internally displaced. More than 1.2 million people are refugees. The worst part of this is these numbers could double or even triple by the end of this year, nearly one-third of Syria's population.

We are working to alleviate this human suffering. The United States is the largest bilateral humanitarian donor. We are providing nearly \$385 million in assistance to those in need across all 14 governorates in Syria and across the neighboring countries. This money is being spent on emergency medical care and supplies, blankets, food, clean water, and shelter. We are sending flour to 50 bakeries in Aleppo and sponsoring food and sanitation projects for the desperate families in the Atmeh refugee camp. But this is not enough to meet the overwhelming need.

In January in Kuwait, over 40 countries pledged \$1.5 billion to help Syrian refugees. We are pressing the countries now to make good on these pledges.

In addition to addressing humanitarian needs, we are preparing for a Syria without Assad by helping the opposition lay the foundation for a democratic transition that protects the rights of all Syrians and that fosters, rather than threatens, stability in the Middle East.

This effort is being coordinated closely with our partners in the region, including Israel. No one wants the Syrian state to collapse or to be overtaken by extremists. No one wants the risks associated with chemical weapons and terrorist bases. That is why we and our partners are helping build the Syrian political opposition, including by recognizing the Syrian Opposition Coalition as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people. Comprised of diverse rep-

representatives inside and outside Syria, the coalition is committed to a democratic, inclusive Syria, free from the influence of violent extremists. Supporting such entities is the best way to ensure that the Syrian state that emerges after the Assad regime is inclusive and representative.

These political efforts are intertwined with our push for negotiations. A negotiated political transition is the best solution to the crisis in Syria. The Geneva communique calls for a transitional governing body with full executive powers and formed on the basis of mutual consent. This means that Assad, who has long lost his legitimacy and whom the opposition will never accept, will not play any role in that transitional governing body. And if Assad is unwilling to decide that he should transfer executive authority, we will continue to find ways to pressure him to think differently about that lies in the future.

While this administration continues to take a hard look at every available, practical, and responsible means to end the suffering of the Syrian people, we do not believe that it is in the United States or the Syrian people's best interest to provide lethal support to the Syrian opposition. The judgments we make must pass the test of making the situation better for the Syrian people and must also take into account the long-term human, financial, and political costs for us, for Syria, and for the region. We continue to believe that a political solution to the crisis is the best way to save the Syrian people further suffering and to avert further destruction of the country for which the regime bears overwhelming responsibility.

Thank you again for the invitation to testify before your committee today. I am happy to take your questions after my colleagues have made their statements.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Jones follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR ELIZABETH JONES

Chairman Menendez and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to present an overview of our policy to promote political transition in Syria.

February marked 2 years since Syrian protesters took peacefully to the street, like others throughout the region, to seek basic rights and protections from their government. What started out as a peaceful demand for dignity and freedom has become one of the most devastating conflicts of the 21st century.

More than 70,000 Syrians have been killed since the beginning of the conflict and the number is rising as the fighting in Damascus and southern Syria intensifies. This March was the deadliest month of the conflict, with over 6,000 Syrians killed.

In addition to the devastating human toll, we face an expanding extremist threat, and a few days ago al-Qaeda announced the extension of its "Islamic State" in Syria. Iran's role in perpetuating the bloodshed inside Syria is well known. Through its ongoing provision of personnel, guidance, and material and financial assistance, Iran is helping the Assad regime continue its repression and systematic violence against the Syrian people. Iran is joined in this effort by Hezbollah, which also provides strong operational support to Assad.

Neighboring countries are paying the price as the spillover of violence and refugees from Syria threatens the stability of Lebanon, the capacity of Jordan, the progress of Iraq, and the security of Israel.

But with each passing day, the regime's grip on power weakens. Territory slips from its grasp, and, in a growing number of towns and villages, a new Syria is being born. The regime of Bashar al-Assad must and will go. The sooner he steps aside, the better for all Syrians.

The United States, along with our partners, is working in several ways to hasten this process and lay the groundwork for a peaceful, democratic future for Syria.

First, we are working to change Assad's calculations. With our allies and partners, we are pressuring the regime to end its war on the Syrian people and come to the negotiating table by range of diplomatic tools including one of the most severe set of economic sanctions. The regime's finances have never been so weak; and it has never been so isolated in the world community.

At the same time—and more critically—we are helping the opposition prepare for a Syria without Assad by laying the foundation for a democratic transition that protects the rights of all Syrian people regardless of their religion, ethnicity, or gender. The opposition has articulated a common vision and transition plan for Syria that offers an alternative to the Assad regime's tyranny. We support this vision.

Our assistance to the Syrian opposition, at the national and local levels, from local councils in liberated areas to civil society, is enabling these groups to plan for the future while providing essential services and extending the rule of law inside liberated areas of Syria now. Ambassador Ford will provide details about our transition assistance.

THE HUMAN COST

We undertake our work even as Syrian civilians face an unprecedented level of ruthlessness from the Assad regime. Every day the regime targets residential neighborhoods with heavy weapons, cluster bombs, and short-range ballistic missiles, including Scuds. The regime is sending its thugs to torture their fellow citizens, destroy hospitals and schools, and indiscriminately kill civilians, all in appalling violation of international law. As the fighting in Damascus intensifies the death toll will rise.

Millions have been forced to flee their homes to seek safety within the country or beyond its borders. According to the U.N., 3 to 4 million people are now internally displaced and more than 1.3 million people are refugees. These numbers could double or even triple by the end of 2013—that would amount to nearly one-third of Syria's population.

We are starting to see troubling signs that the increase in refugees is destabilizing the region. Jordan's Zaatari refugee camp is now Jordan's fifth-largest city, hosting over 100,000 Syrian refugees. Syrian refugees in Lebanon now are around 10 percent of that country's population, threatening Lebanon's fragile ethnosectarian balance. UNRWA reports that over 40,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria have sought refuge in Lebanon, straining resources in already-packed Palestinian camp communities and further heightening tensions. Turkey now hosts over 250,000 Syrian refugees. Tens of thousands of refugees have also fled into Iraq.

To help address this growing humanitarian crisis, we are providing nearly \$385 million in assistance to those in need, across all 14 governorates in Syria and across neighboring countries. This money is being spent on emergency medical care and supplies, blankets, food, clean water, and shelter. We are sending flour to 50 bakeries in Aleppo and sponsoring food and sanitation projects for the desperate families in Atme refugee camp. But this is not enough to meet the overwhelming need.

U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and the Government of Kuwait hosted a donor conference on January 30, at which donor nations pledged over \$1.5 billion to help Syrians in need. But the U.N. appeals for assistance remain only partially funded. Secretary Kerry and I are both personally pressing countries now to make good on their pledges.

THE ROAD AHEAD

In addition to addressing humanitarian needs, we are preparing for a Syria without Assad by helping the opposition lay the foundation for a democratic transition that protects the rights of all Syrians and that fosters, rather than threatens, stability in the Middle East.

That is why we and our partners are helping build the Syrian political opposition, including by recognizing the Syrian Opposition Coalition as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people. Comprised of diverse representatives from inside and outside Syria, the Coalition is committed to a democratic, inclusive Syria free from the influence of violent extremists. Supporting such entities is the best way to ensure that the Syrian state that emerges after the Assad regime is inclusive and representative.

In the months since its formation, the Coalition has made significant progress in deepening its technical expertise, such as by developing the Assistance Coordination Unit (ACU), which identifies Syrian communities most in need and ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches them. The Coalition is also expanding its capacity to coordinate transition planning, including transitional justice plans to hold perpetrators of violence accountable.

But now the Coalition is at a turning point. President Khatib has indicated that he is likely to resign at the end of his term in May. Ghassan Hitto, the Coalition-elected Prime Minister, who has been an effective partner in assistance coordination, is still shaping his role. The Coalition needs international support if it is to move these transitions successfully and build the kind of lasting credibility it needs with the Syrian people so that it can more effectively compete with extremists.

ENDING THE VIOLENCE

We believe that the best way to end the Syrian crisis is through a negotiated political solution. The regime and its supporters will fight to the last person standing. To get to a sustainable peace, Syrians need a political solution that assures all citizens of their rights.

The opposition and members of the regime without blood on their hands must come together to negotiate a deal like the framework laid out in the Geneva communique. This framework—agreed last June by the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, Turkey, and Arab League states—calls for a transitional governing body formed on the basis of mutual consent of the opposition and the Syrian regime to be given full executive powers and guide the country to elections.

This means that Assad, who has long lost his legitimacy and whom the opposition will never accept, will not play any role in that transitional governing body. If he is unwilling to decide that he should transfer executive authority, we will continue to find ways to pressure him to think differently about what lies in the future.

While this administration continues to take a hard look at every available, practical, and responsible means to end the suffering of the Syrian people, we do not believe at this time that it is in the United States or the Syrian people's best interest to provide lethal support to the Syrian opposition. The judgments we make must pass the test of making the situation better for the Syrian people and must also take into account the long-term human, financial, and political costs for us, Syria, and the region. We continue to believe that a political solution to the crisis is the best way to save the Syrian people further suffering and to avert further destruction of the country, for which the regime bears overwhelming responsibility.

As President Obama told the Syrian people in a recent message, "More Syrians are standing up for their dignity. The Assad regime will come to an end. The Syrian people will have their chance to forge their own future. And they will continue to find a partner in the United States of America."

We look forward to working with Congress throughout this process as we seek to protect the interests of the United States in the region and support the needs of the Syrian people in their struggle to create a free, stable, and democratic Syria.

Thank you again for the invitation to testify before your committee today. I am happy to take your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Ambassador Ford.

STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT FORD, U.S. AMBASSADOR TO THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Ambassador FORD. Chairman Menendez and members of the committee, thank you very much for inviting me today.

My colleague, Acting Assistant Secretary Jones, has spoken about sort of the broader picture of the Syrian crisis. So if it is all right with you, I would like to just say a few things about my recent trip to the region and to London and the latest on the particular work we are doing. I know our time is short, and therefore if you can just put my written statement in the record, that would be great.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection.

Ambassador FORD. So the Syrian Opposition Coalition is at a crucial leadership juncture now. President Khatib has indicated that he may leave his position in May. Ghassan Hitto, who is from Texas—he is the coalition-elected Prime Minister. And we know him. We worked with him on getting humanitarian assistance into Syria. But he is still establishing himself in his new role. And I

met him yesterday in London, and he is still determining how he is going to do his work and with whom he will work.

I think more broadly, Mr. Chairman, there is a real competition underway now between extremists and moderates in Syria, and we need to weigh in on behalf of those who promote freedom and tolerance.

Iran's role in the conflict is especially pernicious as it helps the Assad regime build sectarian militias and attracts Hezbollah and Iraqi militants into Syria.

I met on Tuesday with the commander of the opposition armed forces in Aleppo. He highlighted to me that he senses that up in Aleppo, the Syrian regime is slowly running out of soldiers. He said, instead, there are more regime militia fighters where there used to be soldiers, and he, too, highlighted that Iranians and Hezbollah have increased their presence on the ground with the remaining Syrian forces up in Aleppo.

Yesterday, Wednesday, Syrian political leaders meeting with Secretary Kerry also highlighted this Iranian presence, and they, too, highlighted the role of Hezbollah fighters in different cities now in Syria. They also talked about Iraqi Shia fighters from the Abul Abbas Brigade, and we know that brigade from our time in Iraq back in 2004.

Let me underline here that while the Iranians and their friends are helping the Syrian regime, they have not been able to stop the slow progress of the armed opposition. They have slowed it in some places as up in Aleppo, but they have not stopped it. But their presence does aggravate the sectarian nature of the conflict now. And in particular, the Syrian regime is recruiting Alawis, Shia, and Christians for its militias, and the human rights abuses committed by those militias, as well as armed groups in some cases on the opposition side has triggered more fear and fear of retaliation. So let me be clear here now that we condemn human rights abuses committed by all of the sides.

I would also like to be clear that the Syrian regime bears the primary responsibility for turning what had been a peaceful protest movement in the spring of 2011 into an armed conflict and for seeking to survive by making this armed conflict a sectarian one. So I mentioned there is fear on all sides, and it is very difficult to achieve reconciliation in such a climate of fear. But the Syrians are going to have to develop a vision of what freedom means in a new Syria, and it is not going to be easy.

We, for our part, are working to give them a chance to develop that vision by helping them prepare for an inclusive, democratic transition as we push steadily for a negotiated political transition along the lines of the Geneva communique. Let me underline here again that we view that Bashar al-Assad must step aside as part of that political transition.

International support for the opposition coalition is going to be crucial to bolster the opposition coalition's capacity to provide support to Syrians. We helped set up the Friends of Syria group and we have led that steadily. As part of our leadership, Secretary Kerry announced a new package of assistance of \$63 million. That package will help counter extremists. It will help us weigh in on behalf of the moderates, and it will enable the coalition to move

ahead in attracting more support as it develops a political transition process.

We look forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, and with other members of the committee as we go forward. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Ford follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR ROBERT FORD

Chairman Menendez and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to present an overview of our policy to promote political transition in Syria.

I am especially delighted to be here. I just returned from the region and am looking forward to talking about our work there as well as about the progress being made by the Syrian opposition.

With each passing day, the regime is shrinking, as its grip on power and territory weakens. But the opposition's progress on the ground comes at a terrible cost. Syria has become one of the most devastating conflicts of the new century. More than 70,000 Syrians have been killed since the beginning of the conflict and millions forced to flee their homes.

The United States is responding. We are providing humanitarian relief across Syria and the region; working to stop Assad and his regime; imposing sanctions that starve the regime of funds; helping the opposition prepare for a democratic transition that protects the rights of all the Syrian people; and working toward a negotiated political solution to end this conflict with a sustainable peace. We are undertaking all of these efforts in tandem with our partners across the globe and in the region.

THE SYRIAN VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Saving the Syrian state from humanitarian disaster, extremist influences, or state fragmentation, will not be easy, but it is critical to protect our interests and those of our partners in the region.

Many among Syria's minority communities, including Alawis, Druze, Christians, fear what the future holds. The Sunni majority is divided, fractious, and anxious to assert the rights so long denied them by the Assad regime. Iran's role in the conflict is especially pernicious, as it helps the Assad regime build sectarian militias and attracts Hezbollah and Iraqi militias to Syria.

For Syria to survive and endure it must find a path that cuts out such foreign interference and instead provides for a tolerant society that supports regional stability and ensures the dignity of the Syrian people. To effectively make the transition beyond the Assad regime, the opposition will need a vision for a pluralistic Syria that abides by the rule of law, subordinates the military to civilian authority, and guarantees the rights of all of its citizens while preserving continuity of the state and its institutions.

Syrians must plan for this for themselves. And they are starting to do so. Moaz al-Khatib, the president of the Syrian Opposition Coalition, is an imam from Umayyad Mosque, the largest mosque in Damascus. In a very public speech broadcast throughout the Arab world in December, President Khatib rejected extremist ideologies and urged all Syrians, including Alawis, to join the opposition and build a new Syria.

General Salim Idriss, Chief of Staff of the Syrian Opposition's Supreme Military Council, and his regional commander, Colonel Akidi, have appealed to Alawis, who are the backbone of Assad's remaining support: Join us. Don't fight us. We're not fighting you. Join us.

President Khatib also wrote an open letter to the Syrian Christian community in February laying out a vision of respect for the dignity of all Syrians. He rejected the idea of a special tax on Christians, as advocated by some Syrian extremists harkening back to the medieval Caliphate.

This is the tolerance and coexistence that Syria needs—and what the vast majority of Syrians want.

OUR TRANSITION ASSISTANCE

The Syrians have to do this for themselves—the international community cannot do it for them. What we can do is pave the way for this process. That is a large part of what the United States is doing now.

This transition assistance is both supporting the transition away from Assad and helping to ensure that it promotes human freedom and tolerance.

The Assad regime has created an environment that fuels the growth of extremism, and al-Qaeda-linked groups are working to exploit the situation for their own benefit. There is a real competition now between extremists and moderates in Syria and we need to weigh in on behalf of those who promote freedom and tolerance.

Since December 2012, the United States, along with our international partners, has recognized the Syrian Opposition Coalition as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people. Comprised of diverse representatives inside and outside Syria, the Coalition is committed to a democratic, inclusive Syria free from the influence of violent extremists.

We are providing \$117 million in nonlethal, transition assistance to the Coalition and a range of local councils and grassroots groups inside Syria to build a network of ethnically and religiously diverse civilian activists from the top down as well as the bottom up. These funds are strengthening local councils, civil society groups, unarmed political activists, and free media to improve governance, accountability, and service delivery at the subnational and national level.

For instance, the United States has supplied Syrian activists with thousands of pieces of communications gear. One group of lawyers used this equipment to form the Free Lawyers' Union, which has now taken responsibility for legal affairs within the Local Council for the Governorate of Daraa.

We boosted private radio station signals, extending the reach of broadcast on FM stations, and funded media outlets. Those media platforms were used to address sectarian violence and issue public service messages on best practices in the event of chemical weapons exposure.

The United States also trained over 1,500 local leaders and activists—including women and minorities—from over 100 different provincial councils. One recent graduate played a critical role in the Aleppo local council elections last month. He reached out to 240 delegates across Aleppo's liberated areas and broadcast the election—bringing credibility, transparency, and accountability to the process. These trainees are improving the ability of local committees and councils from Damascus to Deir al-Zour in the east to Idlib in the northwest to better provide for the needs of all members of their communities.

We are not doing this work alone. From Norway to Australia, the U.K. to Korea, we are working across the globe with our partners to coordinate our efforts.

A TURNING POINT

But as Ambassador Jones mentioned, with President Khatib indicating his likely resignation at the end of his term in May, the Coalition is at a crucial leadership juncture. Ghassan Hitto, the Coalition-elected Prime Minister, has been a strong partner in coordinating assistance, but is still establishing himself in his new role. International support for the Coalition is crucial in order to bolster its capacity to provide support to the Syrian people and provide a more stable, appealing alternative to extremism.

That is why we are focusing our latest assistance, on fortifying the work of the Coalition in Syria and cementing its ties with local Syrian groups. For instance, we will target assistance to the Coalition to reinforce local councils that meet the needs of their citizens in areas no longer controlled by the regime.

USAID will provide through the Coalition and local councils short-term assistance for urgent needs, such as fuel, heaters, and nutritional and educational supplies for children. USAID will also provide the Coalition with technical experts to help it manage essential services and light infrastructure. These experts will help with technical assessments and track multidonor rehabilitation efforts.

We hear regular reports about the lack of security in newly liberated areas, and thus we have adjusted our programs to enable us to support civilian security through training and nonlethal equipment to reduce the likelihood that extremists will exploit security vacuums in liberated areas.

Supreme Military Council (SMC) Chief of Staff, General Idriss, and those under his command have demonstrated a commitment to a tolerant and inclusive vision of Syria. In the coming weeks we will begin providing them and Coalition food and medical kits for distribution to those in need to signal our support for the moderate and responsible elements of the armed opposition.

Finally, to mitigate the risk that our assistance might end up in the hands of extremists, we will continue to rely on the effective, formal processes that have been established across various agencies in the government to vet the recipients of U.S. assistance.

CONCLUSION

Syria need not face years of civil war, but Syrians will have to stand up to promote the respect of the dignity, and rights for each and every one of their fellow citizens. It won't be easy. The Assad regime favored one community over the majority for decades, and that legacy now leaves many in the country nervous about the future. Syrians must develop and promote a vision of what freedom means in a new Syria, and they must develop and promote an understanding of how regional stability will help them rebuild their shattered country.

And they can. We are working to give them that chance by helping them prepare for an inclusive, democratic transition. We continue to believe that the best solution to the Syrian crisis is a negotiated political transition. The Geneva Communiqué calls for a transitional governing body with full executive powers and formed on the basis of mutual consent.

We look forward to working with Congress throughout this process. Thank you again for the invitation to testify before your committee today. I am happy to take your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Secretary Glaser.

STATEMENT OF HON. DANIEL GLASER, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR TERRORIST FINANCING AND FINANCIAL CRIMES, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY, WASHINGTON, DC

Secretary GLASER. Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, distinguished members of the committee. Thanks for inviting me to testify today on our efforts at Treasury to address critical national security concerns in Syria.

I would like to commend you, Mr. Chairman, and the entire committee for the strong leadership you have shown on this subject.

My remarks today will focus on three aspects of our effort: first, U.S. and international sanctions on the Assad regime; second, our assessment, as far as possible, of the impact of sanctions implemented to date; and third, our concern about the presence of extremist groups in Syria like Hezbollah and the al-Nusra Front.

U.S. and international sanctions are designed to deprive the Assad regime of the financial means it requires to brutalize the Syrian people. The United States has steadily increased pressure on the regime since the beginning of the Syrian uprising in March 2011. President Obama has issued five Executive orders, each imposing new sanctions in response to the violence in Syria. Under these measures, the United States has designated close to 100 individuals, including President Assad himself, and exposed those like the IRGC Quds Force that support the regime and commit human rights abuses in Syria. These actions complement measures taken by Treasury and across the administration to identify Syria as a center for terrorist financing, weapons of mass destruction proliferation, regional destabilization, and public corruption.

Strong U.S. sanctions are only a first step. Ideally the robust U.S. sanctions program would be complemented by U.N. measures, but sadly consensus at the United Nations Security Council has not been reached. Nevertheless, the European Union, the Arab League, and a whole host of other countries have imposed separate, autonomous measures on the Assad regime. EU sanctions target Syrian oil exports, more than 90 percent of which went to Europe before the conflict began. The Arab League has also demonstrated impressive leadership, approving a host of measures designed to isolate the Assad regime. Together with the United States and others,

these countries have worked within the Friends of the Syrian People framework to increase pressure on the Syrian regime.

Moreover, U.S. and international sanctions are having an impact on the Assad regime's ability to access the funding it requires even as the civil war devastates the economy. Oil revenue from the EU previously accounted for about one-third of the government's revenue, tourism for about another one-third of the government's revenue. All of that has dried up. By targeting the Commercial Bank of Syria, the Syrian International Islamic Bank, and the Central Bank of Syria and lobbying others to do the same, Treasury has hampered the regime's ability to finance the repression of the Syrian people.

However, more work remains to be done. The apparent willingness of states like Iran to provide support to the regime undermines the efforts of the rest of the international community to end the violence and speed a democratic transition. The United States has pressed relevant governments to cease financial and other support to the Assad regime, and we will continue to do so. Treasury has been particularly focused on bringing this message directly to the private sector and to financial institutions.

Another problem Treasury is focused on is the growing presence of groups like Hezbollah and the al-Nusra Front in Syria. In 2012, Treasury designated Hezbollah and the group's Secretary General, Hasan Nasrallah, for its role in training, advising, and supporting Assad's forces as they mounted attacks against the Syrian population. These actions, along with Treasury's exposure of Hezbollah's links to an international narcotics trafficking and money laundering network and the group's apparent involvement in plots in Bulgaria and Cyprus, highlight Hezbollah's moral bankruptcy. There can be no doubt of their true nature or the threat they pose to their neighbors and others around the world.

In December, Treasury also took action against the al-Nusra Front, designating two senior leaders for acting on behalf of Al Qaeda in Iraq. This action was taken in coordination with the State Department's listing of the al-Nusra Front as an alias for Al Qaeda in Iraq.

On April 9, just earlier this week, the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq announced the group's merger with the al-Nusra Front under a new name, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, underscoring the danger this group poses for Syria and for the world.

In conclusion, the United States and our partners have done a great deal to establish a broad and far-reaching international sanctions framework targeting the Assad regime, and we will continue our efforts to make that framework as strong as possible. Sanctions are not a silver bullet in ending the Assad regime's vicious war on its own people, but as with any national or international security challenge, sanctions are playing an important role in a broad and comprehensive strategy.

I look forward to working with the committee on these critical issues, and I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have. Thank you, Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Secretary Glaser follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY DANIEL GLASER

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today on our efforts at the Department of the Treasury to address critical national security concerns in Syria: namely, the perpetuation of the violence against the Syrian people by the Assad regime. I would like to commend you, Mr. Chairman, and this entire committee for your strong leadership on this topic, including by focusing today's discussion on these vital issues.

My remarks today will focus on Treasury's efforts, working closely with the State Department and our colleagues across the administration, to limit the Assad regime's access to the international financial system through economic sanctions; our engagement with the international community to isolate the Syrian Government; our assessment, as far as possible, of the impact of sanctions implemented to date; our concerns about foreign interference in the conflict and the presence of extremist groups like the al-Nusra Front; and our priorities and next steps. The United States Government is moving aggressively to facilitate an end to the conflict in Syria, preferably through negotiated political transition from the Assad regime to a competent and representative transitional governing authority. U.S. and international sanctions are a key component of the broader U.S. and international community's effort to achieve this goal, and are designed to deprive the Assad regime of the financial means it requires to support the relentless campaign of violence against the Syrian people.

U.S. Sanctions Regime on Syria

In the months immediately following the beginning of the Syrian uprising in March 2011, President Obama issued three Executive orders (E.O.), each imposing new sanctions in response to the violence in Syria.

On April 29, 2011, President Obama signed E.O. 13572, imposing sanctions on certain persons and providing for the imposition of sanctions on certain persons determined to be responsible for human rights abuses in Syria, including those related to repression. On May 18, 2011, in response to the continued escalation of violence against the Syrian people, the President signed E.O. 13573, sanctioning Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and senior officials of Assad's government. And on August 17, 2011, President Obama issued E.O. 13582, imposing full blocking on all property and interests in property of the Government of Syria. President Obama followed the E.O. with a public call for Assad to step aside. E.O. 13582 generally prohibits transactions between U.S. persons and the Government of Syria, bans the export of U.S. services to and new investment in Syria, and takes aim at a revenue stream for the Syrian Government by banning the importation into the United States of, and transactions or dealings by U.S. persons in, Syrian-origin petroleum and petroleum products.

More recently, the President issued two Executive orders expanding Treasury's and the State's ability to target human rights abusers and sanctions evaders with respect to Iran and Syria. On April 23, 2012, the President issued E.O. 13606, blocking the property of persons determined to have operated information and communications technology in ways that could assist in serious human rights abuses by the Governments of Iran or Syria. On May 1, 2012, President Obama issued E.O. 13608, which authorizes Treasury to impose sanctions on foreign persons who violate certain prohibitions concerning Iran or Syria.

These five Executive orders significantly expand the administration's ability to respond to the conflict in Syria. Along with our colleagues at the State Department, the intelligence community, and throughout the U.S. Government, as well as with our counterparts in the European Union (EU), the Arab League, Turkey, Japan, Australia, Canada, and elsewhere, we have used our authorities to isolate the Assad regime and key regime supporters, and to deprive the regime of the resources it needs to fund its continued repression of the Syrian people. To date, close to \$80 million of Syrian regime funds in the U.S. have been frozen pursuant to these Executive orders. The U.S. alone has designated close to 100 individuals and entities pursuant to these Syria-related Executive orders, thus publicly identifying them as perpetuating the brutal conflict in Syria, blocking their participation in the U.S. financial system and disrupting their access to financial services beyond the United States.

The Syrian regime had been subject to myriad sanctions for a range of illicit activity long before the start of the current conflict. These sanctions, which are still in place, identify Syria as a permissive environment for terrorist financing and facilita-

tion, a weapons proliferation hub, a foreign policy actor that threatens its neighbors, and a financial sector rife with corruption.

- **Terrorist Financing:** Syria has been listed by the State Department as a state sponsor of terrorism since 1979. In March of 2006, Treasury identified the Commercial Bank of Syria (CBS) and its subsidiary, Syrian Lebanese Commercial Bank, as a financial institution of primary money laundering concern under Section 311 of the USA PATRIOT Act, noting concerns regarding CBS' facilitation of terrorist financing as a major reason for the identification. From 2007 to 2009, Treasury took multiple actions under its terrorism authority, E.O. 13224, against the foreign fighter facilitation hub that funneled resources and manpower to al-Qa'ida in Iraq via Syria. In 2008, the U.S. Government created a new authority in order to address the threat to peace and stability in Iraq emanating from Syria—E.O. 13438—and Treasury designated five Syrian individuals and two entities pursuant to the E.O. that year. Treasury took separate action under E.O. 13315 against six Syria-based individuals for their ties to the former Iraqi regime.
- **Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Proliferation:** The Scientific Studies and Research Center (SSRC) was listed under E.O. 13382 in June of 2005 for developing and producing nonconventional weapons and the missiles to deliver them. The Higher Institute of Applied Science and Technology (HIAT), the Electronics Institute, and the National Standards and Calibration Laboratory (NSCL) were designated under that same Executive order as subordinates of SSRC in January of 2007. Treasury also designated CBS, and its subsidiary the Syrian Lebanese Commercial Bank, on August 10, 2011, for the provision of financial services to Syrian and North Korean entities previously sanctioned by the U.S. for facilitating WMD proliferation. Most recently, Treasury designated the Syria International Islamic Bank (SIIB) on May 30, 2012, pursuant to E.O. 13382 for acting for or on behalf of CBS and providing services to its subsidiary, Syrian Lebanese Commercial Bank. In July of 2012 Treasury designated five front companies working on behalf of SSRC, Industrial Solutions, Mechanical Construction Factory, Handasieh (a.k.a. General Organization for Engineering Studies), Business Lab, and Syrian Arab Company for Electronic Industries (aka Syronics) pursuant to E.O. 13382 for supporting the Syrian regime's proliferation activities. The Department of State also designated these same five companies pursuant to E.O. 12938. In September 2012, Treasury designated the Army Supply Bureau pursuant to E.O. 13382 and 13582.
- **Threatening Neighbors:** From 2005 to 2007, Treasury sanctioned several Syrian officials for their military and security interference in Lebanon and their support to designated terrorist entities in Lebanon pursuant to E.O. 13338. Treasury also targeted several individuals under E.O. 13441 who were part of the Syrian regime's attempts to interfere in Lebanon's political processes.
- **Public Corruption:** The U.S. took action to combat the public corruption evident in Syria, and Treasury designated Bashar al-Assad's brother-in-law, Rami Makhlouf, and companies he owned in 2008 under E.O. 13460, which targets individuals and entities determined to have benefited from or contributed to public corruption of senior Syrian regime officials.

International Cooperation

While the U.S. Government has implemented our own robust set of measures, it is important that we continue working with our partners around the world to multilateralize the effort to pressure the Assad regime. Ideally, such efforts would start at the United Nations. Unfortunately, consensus on a United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) has not been reached. Nevertheless, the United States has worked with the EU, Arab League, and a whole host of countries to impose separate autonomous measures on the Assad regime and has worked within the framework of the Friends of the Syrian People International Working Group on Sanction (FoSP IWGS) to build a robust international sanctions regime designed to pressure the Syrian government and bring about an end to the conflict.

Perhaps the most impactful measures have been imposed by the EU. Since the EU was one of Syria's most significant trading partners prior to the uprising, EU sanctions in particular have dealt a severe economic blow to the Assad regime's finances. Prior to the start of the Syrian uprising in March 2011, the Assad regime had generated about one-third of its revenue from the oil sector, with the EU accounting for more than 90 percent of Syria's crude oil exports. Since the October 2011 implementation of an EU embargo on Syrian petroleum exports, the regime has struggled to find alternative markets for selling its heavy crude. In addition to the ban on the import or transport of Syrian petroleum, and in close consultation with the U.S. Government, the EU levied sanctions that largely parallel the U.S.

sanctions regime, including restrictions on transactions with the Commercial Bank of Syria (October 2011) and the Central Bank of Syria (February 2012), bans on the provision of certain financial services (including insurance), arms, and military equipment, prohibitions on the provision of currency services for the Syrian Government, and bans on the direct or indirect sale, purchase or brokering in gold, precious metals and diamonds.

The Arab League has also taken unprecedented steps, including approving measures that call on member states to block nonessential commodities, halt transactions with the Central Bank of Syria, end financing for Arab-funded projects in Syria, a travel ban and asset freeze on regime elites, and a ban on commercial flights. Some Arab countries have gone even farther, with Saudi Arabia and Qatar demonstrating leadership within the Arab League and at the U.N., lobbying for action from others in the international community. The Government of Qatar further demonstrated its regional leadership and willingness to go a step further by working with Treasury to take coordinated action on May 30, 2012, to designate the Syrian International Islamic Bank. Treasury continues to encourage its Arab League partners to implement these unprecedented sanctions effectively. As recently as last month I traveled to several countries in the Gulf to discuss these issues.

Others have also taken action. Turkey, Syria's neighbor and an important trading partner, has imposed sanctions including targeted bans and asset freezes of high-ranking regime figures and associated businessmen, a freeze of official lines of credit, ending relations with the Central Bank of Syria, halting new transactions with the Commercial Bank of Syria, and an embargo on military aid, arms sales, and weapons transit to the Syrian regime. Others, like Canada, Japan, Switzerland, and Australia have also taken action against regime officials and key Syrian industries, including asset freezes, an embargo on arms sales and Syrian-origin petroleum purchases, and travel bans.

In addition to these independent actions, the EU, Arab League, and others have worked together with the United States within the FoSP IWGS framework to coordinate efforts to increase the pressure on the Syrian Government and hasten the end of the conflict. Since the inaugural working group meeting in Paris on April 17, 2012, the FoSP IWGS has been committed to the sovereignty, independence, national unity and territorial integrity of Syria and has called for effective implementation of sanctions against the Assad regime in Syria in order to exert strong pressure on the Syrian regime and to bring about an end to the violence and enable a democratic transition. In close cooperation with our colleagues at the State Department, Treasury has played a key role in international engagement on Syria through the Friends of the Syrian People process, contributing to the U.S. Government's effort to coordinate broader and more effective sanctions implementation among like-minded countries. Since April 2012, the sanctions working group has met five times at various locations around the world, including Washington, DC. This working group last met February 26, 2013, in Bulgaria, and in this forum, 56 countries, as well as the EU and Arab League, agreed to refrain from the purchase of Syrian phosphates, a considerable source of revenue for the Syrian Government, as well as halting the printing or provision of currency for the Syrian government, and banning arms shipments and military technical assistance to the Syrian regime. The group also committed to preventing the Syrian Government from acquiring technology that can disrupt communications or track individuals in Syria and opposing the continued provision of financial support to the regime, as well as to prepare for transition by reminding financial institutions of the need to protect against the flight of regime-related assets and declaring the willingness of the group to address Syria's outstanding sovereign debt, in accordance with internationally established processes. Treasury and the State Department continue to engage our international partners on these issues.

Impact of Sanctions

Even in the midst of a devastating civil war, U.S. and international sanctions are having a significant impact on the Assad regime's ability to access the international financial system and raise critical foreign currency revenue. The EU previously accounted for more than 90 percent of Syria's crude exports. Thus the EU actions blocking the purchase of Syrian-origin petroleum products and banning new investment in the Syrian petroleum industry have had a massive impact on the regime's revenue stream. By targeting the Commercial Bank of Syria and Syria International Islamic Bank, in addition to the Central Bank of Syria, and lobbying other members of the international community to do the same, we have hampered the regime's ability to continue to finance its repression of the Syrian people. Another significant source of revenue and foreign currency came from tourism, which has dried up since the violence started almost 2 years ago. More broadly, the real GDP declined

approximately 19 percent in 2012, and the official rate of the Syrian pound has depreciated more than 50 percent against the U.S. dollar since January 2011, though the official rate probably understates the rate of depreciation on the black market.

Treasury has also engaged directly with the governments and private sectors of countries that border Syria, such as Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Turkey, which are particularly vulnerable to attempts by the Syrian Government to evade U.S. and international sanctions. Treasury has consistently warned private financial institutions in this region of the risks of dealing with the Assad regime and called upon them to refrain from providing financial services to the Syrian Government. In particular, given the regional prominence of Lebanon's financial sector and close historic ties between Syria and Lebanon, Treasury focused on maintaining an ongoing dialogue with Lebanese authorities and representatives of the Lebanese private sector to underscore the importance of vigilance with respect to Syria.

The U.S. and our partners have employed a variety of authorities to deprive the Assad regime of revenue, but absent a U.N. Security Council Resolution that imposes global sanctions on Syria, gaps still exist. The apparent willingness of states like Iran, and others to provide financial, shipping, or other services to the regime undermines the efforts of the rest of the international community to bring about an end to the violence and hasten a democratic transition. The administration has pressed relevant governments and companies to cease financial and other support to the Assad regime and work with the international community to find a peaceful solution to the conflict, and will continue to do so, though our views on and approach to resolving this conflict still diverge.

Foreign Influence and Extremists

We have also used our authorities to expose the involvement of foreign actors in Syria. In particular, Treasury has focused on the significant role played by Hezbollah and Iran in Syria. On August 10, 2012, Treasury designated Hezbollah pursuant to E.O. 13582 for its role in training, advising, and supporting Assad's forces as they mount attacks against the Syrian population. On September 13, 2012, Treasury also designated Hasan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's Secretary General, specifically for his role in overseeing Hezbollah's actions in support of the Syrian regime. These actions, and the public burial of Hezbollah fighters killed in Syria, highlight Hezbollah's activities within Syria and its integral role in the continued violence the Assad regime is inflicting on the Syrian population. Under the Assad regime, Syria has been a longstanding supporter of Hezbollah—providing safe haven to Hezbollah and routing weapons, in many cases from Iran, to Hezbollah in Lebanon. Hezbollah has returned the favor, by providing direct training of Syrian Government personnel inside Syria, advice, and extensive logistical support to the Government of Syria's ruthless efforts to fight against the opposition. Hezbollah also has played a substantial role in efforts to expel Syrian opposition forces from areas within Syria.

In conjunction with our activities to disrupt Hezbollah's support of the regime in Syria, Treasury has taken a number of actions that highlight the group's moral bankruptcy and its efforts to expand its regional influence and conduct terrorist activities worldwide. Treasury's exposure of Hezbollah's links to an international narcotics trafficking and money laundering network, the February 2013 announcement by Bulgarian officials identifying Hezbollah as the party responsible for the July 2012 bombing in Burgas, and the March 2013 conviction in Cyprus of a Hezbollah operative for plotting attacks there, belie Hezbollah's claims of being purely a Lebanese political movement, and provide further proof of Hezbollah's true intentions and the threat they pose to their neighbors.

Iran's pernicious interference in Syria has not been simply through proxies and partners such as Hezbollah, but has been direct as well. The Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps—Qods Force (IRGC—QF,) which facilitates Iran's material support to the Syrian General Intelligence Directorate (GID), and was listed for sanctions in the annex to E.O. 13572, which targets those responsible for human rights abuses in Syria. It had been previously sanctioned under E.O. 13224 in October 2007 for its support to terrorists, including Hezbollah. Qasem Soleimani, the long-time commander of the IRGC—QF, was also individually designated last year pursuant to E.O. 13572. In addition to the actions taken against the IRGC—QF and Qasem Soleimani in 2011 under E.O. 13572, the United States has repeatedly exposed Iran's support for the ongoing violence perpetrated by the Syrian Government. In June 2011, Treasury designated Iran's Law Enforcement Forces (LEF) which, like the IRGC—QF, provided material support to the Syrian GID; the LEF also dispatched personnel to Damascus to assist the Syrian Government in its efforts to suppress the Syrian people. In February 2012, Treasury designated the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security, Iran's primary intelligence organization, for providing substantial technical assistance to the Syrian GID. Iran also

appears to be providing financial assistance to Damascus, including the reported provision of a \$1 billion credit facility to allow Syrian importers goods and materials from Iran without the need for direct cash transfers.

Treasury also sanctioned armed militia groups on December 11, 2012, that operate under the control of the Syrian Government, Jaysh al-Sha'bi and Shabiha, as well as two Shabiha leaders, pursuant to E.O. 13582. These militias have been instrumental in the Assad regime's campaign of terror and violence against the citizens of Syria. Jaysh al-Sha'bi was created, and continues to be maintained, with support from Iran and Hezbollah and is modeled after the Iranian Basij militia, which has proven itself effective at using violence and intimidation to suppress political dissent in Iran. Treasury will continue to expose Iran's direct support to the Syrian Government, as well as its continued support of Hezbollah's activities within Syria and throughout the region. These designations underscore that, despite the Iranian Government's public rhetoric claiming solidarity with the popular movements that have swept through the Arab world, Iran's official policy is in fact to export the same brutal and repressive tactics employed by the Iranian Government in Tehran in 2009.

More recently, Treasury has used its authorities to address the growing danger of Islamic extremists in Syria. On December 11, 2012, Treasury designated two senior leaders of the Syrian-based al-Nusra Front, Maysar Ali Musa Abdallah al-Juburi and Anas Hasan Khattab, pursuant to E.O. 13224 for acting on behalf of Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). This designation was taken in coordination with the U.S. Department of State action to list the al-Nusra Front as an alias of AQI. On April 9, the leader of AQI, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, announced the merger of AQI and the al-Nusra Front under the new moniker, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. AQI had been previously designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization and a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT). As the Syrian people continue their struggle against the repressive Assad regime, al-Nusra Front has sought to exploit the instability inside Syria for its own purposes, using tactics and espousing an ideology drawn from AQI that the Syrian people broadly reject. Since November 2011, al-Nusra Front has claimed responsibility for nearly 900 attacks, killing and wounding hundreds of Syrians. These activities are attempts by AQI to hijack the struggles of the legitimate Syrian opposition to further its own extremist ideology. In addition to the goal of speeding the end of Assad's brutality, Treasury takes seriously our core mission of disrupting al-Qaeda, as well as disrupting Al Qaeda in Iraq and its affiliates like the al-Nusra Front, wherever they may seek to establish a foothold to develop a safe haven from which to conduct attacks internationally. As part of those efforts, we have persistently engaged regional partners who share our goals of preventing the spread of al-Qaeda-linked groups, and reinforced the dangers of providing support to groups inside Syria without putting in place the proper mechanisms for vetting assistance.

CONCLUSION

The United States, working with our partners, has established a broad and far-reaching sanctions framework targeting the Assad regime. Treasury will continue to implement the President's authorities to deprive the Assad regime of revenue and engage our foreign partners, working closely with the State Department, in an effort to continue to broaden and deepen the coalition taking action against Syria under the FoSP framework.

We also recognize that after Assad steps aside, we will need to be ready both to help the legitimate new authorities rebuild the country and constrain those actors that either profit from continued bloodshed, like Iran and Hezbollah, or thrive on instability, like the al-Nusra Front.

As part of our efforts to assist the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (SOC), we have begun laying the groundwork for the lifting of sanctions, in order to facilitate Syria's economic recovery. Treasury has already issued a General License to allow nongovernmental organizations to support certain not-for-profit activities in Syria, including humanitarian projects, education, non-commercial development projects directly benefiting the Syrian people, and democracy promotion. Just last month, we issued another General License authorizing U.S. persons to export services, including money, to the SOC provided the money is not for a person designated by Treasury and goes through a specifically licensed account of the Coalition at a U.S. bank. Treasury has also begun to discuss appropriate debt relief, in accordance with internationally established processes, so that Assad's successors are not unduly burdened in their efforts to restore the country. We have also taken steps to prepare for asset recovery and protect against the risk of flight of proceeds of public corruption and regime assets. As we prepare for a time

after Assad, we will caution our partners to remain vigilant and issue appropriate guidance to their financial sectors.

Sanctions are not a silver bullet in ending the Assad regime's vicious war on its own people. But as with any national or international security challenge, sanctions are playing an important role within a broad and comprehensive strategy. Treasury is committed to continuing to use all our authorities to make these efforts as effective as possible. I look forward to working with Congress on these critical issues, and would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you all. Let me start off.

Secretary Jones, you say no lethal weapons but a political solution. I think most analysis says that we are at a stalemate here. Assad has an absolute monopoly on air power, and he has a monopoly on artillery power. And as such, he probably believes that he can stay in the struggle for as long as it takes for him to stay in power; 70,000 dead, 4 million displaced according to the United Nations.

What is the political solution that you envision?

Ambassador JONES. Mr. Chairman, I agree with you that the prospects in Syria are not good. The fact that so many people are dying every day is a measure of the tragedy that is unfolding there. However, the discussion that we have had within the administration focuses on, for the most Syrians, how best to address this problem as far as the United States is concerned, to do it in the most comprehensive, responsible way in ways that result in something better for the Syrian people.

As Ambassador Ford mentioned, we have spent a tremendous amount of time working with various elements of the Syrian opposition—the moderate Syrian opposition—as well as with the Free Syrian Army on, What is their political vision for the future of Syria? How would they organize themselves? How would they think in terms of how to connect with members of the Syrian regime who do not have blood on their hands? very much along the lines of the outline of the Geneva communique that we have talked about.

The CHAIRMAN. I do not want to interrupt you except that my time is fleeting. I have a specific question. I have heard everything you have said, which is really a regurgitation of your testimony. What is the political solution that you envision or that we envision? Because at the end of the day, unless you change the tipping point here, unless you change the calibration—we have not convinced the Russians to change their views. The Iranians are in here. In fact, Ambassador Ford said their participation is pernicious. Sanctions have not significantly denied the regime to the point that it has changed their calculation. What is the political solution that we envision?

Ambassador JONES. Well, there are several elements to it.

One is to support the Syrian Opposition Coalition as much as we possibly can, to increase that. So there is a big effort underway that we are working on right now to get our partners to—involving ourselves and our partners to support the Syrian Opposition Coalition in ways that make it more clear that they are the ones who can garner the most assistance from the outside world. They are the ones who have the credibility. They are the ones who can provide the services to their communities inside Syria in ways that the Assad regime cannot.

The second is you mentioned Iran and Russia. On Russia, we spend quite a bit of time working with the Russians to persuade them that the future of Syria requires their participation in a positive way to bring the Assad regime to the table. Secretary Kerry met with Foreign Minister Lavrov yesterday to work further on exactly this problem. The Russians, after all, did sign up to the Geneva communique that we issued last June 30, and we will keep working with the Russians to see if we cannot find ways to get their help to bring forward the kind of political negotiations that we are talking about.

And third, we are working aggressively with our partners in the Arab world and in Europe to assure that we are giving the same political message to the Syrian opposition, that we are giving the same political message to Assad.

And last, on Iran, we have spent a big effort with Prime Minister Maliki in Iraq to persuade him that the overflights that he is granting to Iranian flights is not only not in Iraq's interest, but it is certainly not in Syria's interest. It is what fuels the ability of Assad to carry on his military depredations on his own people.

The CHAIRMAN. I appreciate your answer. I just do not see the political solution there at the end of the day.

Let me ask you, Ambassador Ford. How confident are we that we can differentiate between groups that espouse our values and those who do not within Syria?

Ambassador FORD. Mr. Chairman, we know a lot more about the armed opposition than we did 6 months ago or a year ago. It is dynamic. It is always evolving and new groups appear and there are mergers and others. But we do know a set of commanders, for example, the gentlemen that I met in Gaziantep on Tuesday, Col. Abdel Jabar al-Akidey, who has reached out to Alawis. He has reached out to Christians. His fellow commander in Idlib province next to Aleppo, Afef Soleimani, has done the same. People like them have facilitated United Nations humanitarian convoys to get to camps and to people in need. They have actually tamped down in some cases the extremists. For example, extremists tried to block the U.N. humanitarian convoys up in Idlib, and the gentleman I met actually intervened on the ground himself to stop that.

So there are some people. Gen. Salim Idriss, the overall commander of the Syrian military command, the SMC, also has reached out. He issued a very widely viewed statement on the 2-year anniversary of the Syrian revolution. It was all over Arabic satellite television networks where he urged the people who are still supporting Assad to stop and to join the opposition. So there are good people that we could work with, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. Finally, Secretary Glaser, let me just ask you. You heard from the Ambassador that Iran is particularly pernicious here with reference to our sanctions in that regard, and I want to know what success we are having there and particularly what success are you having—are you targeting privately held assets of Assad and the Makhlof families and other wealthy Syrian insiders who may be keeping the regime afloat?

Secretary GLASER. Yes. Thank you for the question, Mr. Chairman.

And Ambassador Ford is exactly correct. As you have affirmed, Iran is playing a pernicious role in the situation both in terms of real boots on the ground and real assistance and financially as well.

In terms of what we can do about it, I think there are two things that we are trying to do about it from a sanctions perspective, from a Treasury Department perspective. One is to use our authority to highlight the role that Iran is playing and to shine a light on it. And we have used our authorities to highlight the role that the IRGC Quds Force is playing in terms of human rights abuses in Syria, that Soleimani himself is playing with respect to Syria. We have highlighted the MOIS and a variety of other Iranian individuals who are supporting the activity in Syria.

Beyond that—and, Chairman, you have been so important personally in just our broad sanctions efforts against Iran as a country and all of the things that we are doing across the board to deprive Iran of access to the international financial system, deprive Iran of its ability to repatriate its assets and to gain access to its reserves.

As we do that and as we put more pressure on Iran, the hope would be that there would be fewer funds available to Iran to spend on Syria. I think it is an important data point for the Iranian people to understand that while the Iranian people are suffering hardships in terms of their own economy and in terms of the impact that their own mismanagement of their economy—as this is happening, I think that they should understand that Iran is, nevertheless, finding money to spend on aiding and abetting the murder of the Syrian people. And this is something that we are working very hard to counter.

With respect to the second part of your question, of course we are targeting senior regime officials. We have targeted President Assad himself. We have targeted Rami Makhlouf. We have targeted other regime officials. In the United States, as I say in my written testimony, we have frozen \$83 million. Whether that is a valid measure of success one way or the other, I do not know, but we are constantly monitoring the international financial system and looking for points of access that individuals like that would have. And certainly to the extent that we could get our hands on that money, we will freeze that money.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Corker.

Senator CORKER. Thank you.

Again, thank you for your testimony, Ambassador Ford. I know there is no one that knows this conflict better than you. You spent a lot of time there and I know you were there in the beginning.

And I want to go back. I know that Secretary Jones mentioned some of the activities that are underway. But I am just having difficulty understanding—and I think you would know best—how to articulate what our key strategic objectives are. And what principles guide our growing involvement? In other words, as we move along, we get involved in other ways. What are the principles that are driving that?

Ambassador Ford.

Ambassador FORD. Senator, there are, I think, four key things that we are working toward.

First and foremost, we do not want Syria's very large stock of chemical weapons to be used or to fall into the hands of terrorist groups.

Second, we do not want Syria to become a base for terrorist operations.

In addition, it needs to be a source of stability in the region more broadly, and the large refugee flows out of Syria are actually straining the neighboring states now, and in particular straining Jordan and Lebanon, but to a lesser extent, Turkey and Iraq.

And we do not think that these things can be achieved without a political transition, a negotiated political transition. If we do not have a negotiated transition, Senator, our view is that the move toward fragmentation in Syria will continue, that the sectarian divides that I already talked about in my oral testimony will actually get worse, and the risks to those interests that I outlined at the beginning will actually grow worse.

Senator CORKER. So it seems that our objectives have evolved. I know in the beginning it was sort of focused on more of an Arab Spring movement of democracy and a representative government, and now our objectives are more focused on making sure the chemical weapons are not utilized and it does not become a safe haven for terrorist activity or a hotbed of terrorist activity. So I know that that is quite an evolution from where we began.

You talk about a political solution with the various groups. I know we have had all kinds of intelligence briefings. The characteristics of these groups are very, very different. Do you agree this conflict likely—even after Assad falls, a conflict will likely go on for some time without something we are unaware of today just between the groups themselves?

Ambassador FORD. The groups that we are supporting, Senator, are talking about a vision of a country and a vision of a state that is inclusive and that will treat citizens equally regardless of their religion or their ethnicity. And that is the best opportunity we have to isolate extremists. There is absolutely an extremism problem in Syria, and it is incumbent on the Syrian Opposition Coalition and the Supreme Syrian Military Council, that I mentioned, to isolate those extremists.

I do not think it will be easy to isolate those extremists, Senator, but I think there is an opportunity to contain the sectarian divisions with the kind of outreach that I mentioned from both the political opposition as well as the Syrian Supreme Military Command.

Senator CORKER. Who within our Government is the convening entity that is ensuring that all that we are doing there is working toward the end, if you will, that you have outlined in your comments?

Ambassador FORD. Senator, we work directly with the National Security staff and the President.

Senator CORKER. But who convenes and makes sure on a daily basis that we are actually working toward the end that has been outlined in the opening comments and in questioning? Which entity is convening on a daily basis and making sure we are working toward those ends?

Ambassador FORD. I would say it is the National Security Council, and Mr. Donilon and Mr. Blinken are in the day-to-day things. So, we at the State Department, have the lead on a lot of the political things I mentioned. The United States Agency for International Development is involved in a lot of the humanitarian issues. In some cases, the Department of Defense is involved in different kinds of planning that you have heard about before. There are many different U.S. Government agencies. Danny is here from the Treasury Department. So there are regular meetings of both the Deputies, Deputy Secretary level, as well as the Secretary level. So it is quite a coordinated effort now, Senator.

Senator CORKER. If I could, one more question, Mr. Chairman.

Obviously, we are concerned about what happens inside Syria, but this is creating, as has been alluded to, instability in surrounding countries. And obviously, when many foreign fighters have made their way into Syria, what are we doing with the surrounding countries to ensure that when this conflict subsides or if it changes directions, we do not further—these countries are not further destabilized?

Ambassador JONES. Senator, we work closely with each of the neighbors in particular, not least because of the refugee problems that Ambassador Ford talked about. One of the things that is very important in terms of the refugees is that each of the countries keep their borders open so that the refugee flows can continue.

We have been very aggressive in a positive way about participating in U.N. appeals. The United States, as I mentioned, is the largest bilateral donor at this point with \$385 million for Syria on the humanitarian side and on the program side.

In addition, we work closely with a group of countries, as I mentioned, in the Arab League and in the European Union who are particularly focused on Syria on the issues that you mentioned, what about Turkey, what about Lebanon, what about Jordan, what about the issues that emanate from Syria that destabilize those countries. It was not an accident that Secretary Kerry went to each of those countries on his first trip to discuss exactly those kinds of issues with these countries.

In recognition of the destabilizing effect of the huge number of refugees that have gone to Jordan, for instance, we have provided, as the President announced when he was there, \$200 million to help Jordan deal with the influx of refugees. That is in addition to what we provide to the United Nations and the U.N. appeals. We are trying to do the same thing in Lebanon to a lesser extent.

Senator CORKER. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you all for not only being here to testify but for your service during this very challenging time.

The crisis in Syria continues. Every day more people are dying. More people are leaving Syria. I was recently in Turkey on the Syrian border at the Kilis refugee camp. You are right, Secretary Jones. It is fortunate that Turkey and Jordan are keeping their borders open. That is an extremely important point. Now over a million people have left Syria. Over a million people are dislocated within Syria. The circumstances are pretty dire.

I must tell you, in talking to the opposition people that I met with in Istanbul and talking on the border, the view is that the international community, particularly the United States, is not doing very much. That is their perception. I understand what we are doing, but the perception is that we are not doing very much. And it was not so much whether the aid was lethal or not. It was just they did not know what we were doing.

Ambassador Ford, you mentioned the point that we know who the good players are in the opposition, but the concern is that whatever support we give—will that end up in the hands of extremists? We do not have boots on the ground. We do not have people on the ground. We do not really have a good sense as to what happens after the aid that we provide enters Syria itself. And their extremist elements seem to be growing and becoming more effective within the opposition, which has many of us very concerned.

So we want the Assad regime to end. We want Mr. Assad at The Hague to be held accountable for his war crimes. That is absolutely clear. And we want a stable government in Syria that respects the rights of its citizens.

But as Senator Corker said, our objective is to make sure chemical weapons are not used. Our objective is to make sure that Syria does not become a safe haven for terrorist organizations. Yet, it looks like perhaps under the umbrella of the opposition that extremist groups are finding a place to operate.

What can you tell us about our objectives here, our plans here to make sure that the people that we are helping will not end up supporting extremist terrorist activities within Syria that could be used against our interests?

Ambassador FORD. Senator, you have stated it exactly right, that we have a strategic goal, a stable Syrian Government which respects the rights of all of its citizens that is inclusive. We think that that kind of government, that kind of state offers the best prospect of preventing the proliferation of chemical weapons to terrorist groups. That kind of state offers the best chance of isolating extremists and containing them and ultimately getting Syria rid of them. And that kind of state offers the best chance for working with the other states of the region to promote regional peace and stability. So that is, indeed, our strategic goal, this kind of a government.

Now, you have asked what kinds of measures are we taking or what kind of steps are we taking to make sure that assistance we provide to armed opposition groups does not fall into bad hands. I can tell you that a great deal of effort has been made by different parts of the U.S. Government to understand the armed opposition. And as I said, it evolves. It is not a static thing. And so we track those developments extremely carefully. The commanders that I mentioned, Salim Idriss, Abdel Jabar al-Akidey, and others from the Supreme Military Council—we have watched their track record, Senator, for many months now. I have talked to them many times. I think some of the members of this committee have talked to some of them. We have seen what they have done on the ground, whether it be in terms of outreach, whether it be in terms of assisting United Nations personnel deliver humanitarian aid. And so we can work with them.

Senator CARDIN. Do we have the ability to track how our assistance is being handled within Syria?

Ambassador FORD. We do not have, as you would put it, Senator, boots on the ground, but we will be able to get a very good sense of where the assistance is going.

Let me put it to you this way, Senator. We will be able to triangulate and understand where it goes.

Ambassador JONES. May I just add a little bit of detail? No. 1, we do a tremendous amount of vetting. We do very careful vetting on all of the organizations and the people in those organizations to whom we provide assistance. As we provide grants, as we sign grants with these organizations, part of the grant is an accountability process so that the grantees, our implementing partners, are required to report back to us with evidence of how they have used the assistance and the materials that we provide them. And then separately, we have an independent review of people on the ground, third parties, who can come back and tell us whether the assistance has been used in the way that it was intended to be used. So the fact that we do not have boots on the ground is a problem, but we have worked around that by having these other devices that we use in order to be as certain as we possibly can be that our assistance is used in the way it is intended to be used.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Rubio.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My statements on Syria have been reported. So people know that I believe in a more forward-leaning policy with regard to Syria. But I was hoping to enlist your help reaching folks back home and elsewhere that perhaps do not follow this on a daily basis but have asked me certain questions about it.

The first question I get is—and I hope you will help me to answer them—Why do we care? What is in the interest of the United States in this conflict happening halfway around the world? There are civil wars everywhere. Why is this one important for us to be engaged in at any level? What would you say to them? And I think the question is for all of you.

Ambassador JONES. Let me start.

In the first instance, I would argue and explain to our American colleagues that it is very important that the United States allies in the region also be in a situation that is safe and secure for them, along the lines that we discussed just a couple of minutes ago.

But in addition to that, it is very important to all of us in the United States that there not be a country in the region that can be used by extremist organizations to plot against us once again. No. 2.

No. 3, it is also very important to all of us that the chemical weapons, the very large amount of chemical weapons that the Assad regime has, not be allowed to get into the hands of people who could use them against our allies in the region, our friends in Europe, or us.

Senator RUBIO. Just to summarize, the reason why it is in the national interest of the United States is because, No. 1, we do not want our allies, our strong allies, in the region, Israel, Jordan, Turkey, et cetera, to feel threatened by this; No. 2, because we do

not want there to be created an unstable environment that can be used as a staging ground for attacks against the United States, both at home and around the world; and No. 3, because it is a nation awash with very dangerous weapons, and those weapons can be transferred to all sorts of bad actors around the world to be used against our interests. Is that accurate?

Ambassador JONES. Yes.

Senator RUBIO. I just wanted to make sure. All right. Good.

And then the second question that I get asked about—well, let me segue to the third one first, and this is a concern that I have.

And that is, that Syria, as we know it—and maybe this is best for you, Ambassador Ford, having spent so much time there. The nation of Syria, as we know it, the lines that have been drawn and so forth, was really a creation of Western powers and the end of the mandate in that region, et cetera. Is there a national Syrian identity that can form a nation in the aftermath of a fall? I think that is the question that I have always had and I wondered. Is this a bunch of people that we forced to live together that do not really belong together? Or is there a national Syrian identity that can somehow rally people around?

Ambassador FORD. Senator, one of the books I read in college years ago was called “Tribes with Flags” by an ABC news correspondent named Charlie Glass. Syria absolutely was created out of the wake of World War I and the collapse of the Turkish Ottoman Empire. But fast forward 100 years and a Syrian national identity has emerged on the basis of several things.

No. 1, there is a particular Syrian dialect of Arabic that is different from other dialects. And so one Syrian talking to another knows when he is talking to a Syrian versus some other person from the region.

Second, there is a pride among Syrians for both the multiconfessional and the multiethnic nature of their society which actually goes back millenniums. There is a very ancient Christian community there. There is a very ancient Shia community there, and there is a great deal of pride in that. The sectarian divides, which the regime has fostered, I think put that at risk, but I absolutely believe that it can be put back together. And I think more importantly, Senator, it does not really matter what I think. It matters what Syrians think. And I have not met a Syrian yet who thinks the country should be divided. Instead, 100 percent of the people I talked to without exception say it needs to be a free country and a state that does not divide people but instead celebrates the diversity of the society itself.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

And my last question is with regard to the opposition. It has been touched upon a little bit lately. The general perception among many people here in the United States seems to be that the opposition is replete with anti-American, anti-Western terrorist elements that we would be empowering if we were to get engaged, et cetera.

My understanding, and as you have outlined today, is it is much more complex than that. There is certainly an element on the ground that espouses these views, and unfortunately, they happen to be the best armed, the best equipped, and the best organized although that may be changing. But my understanding—and I

think it has been started to be reported here in the media. In fact, it might have been even in the article today—is that as soon as this conflict ends and, in fact, before this conflict even ends, a second conflict is already emerging on the ground in Syria, and that is between these opposition groups for both influence control and power in the region.

My view of it has been that we would rather the winners of that secondary conflict, in essence, the best organized, the best equipped, and the best empowered group in Syria in the opposition, be the people that are somewhat reasonable and view the world the way we do as opposed to some of these more radical elements.

What is the status of that secondary conflict? And what steps are we taking to ensure that the folks who are best organized, the best equipped in the aftermath of the fall of Assad and even before are those who we think we can work with the best?

Ambassador FORD. You have hit it right on the head, Senator, that there is a competition now in Syria between moderate forces—I am going to call them moderates—versus extremists, the al-Qaeda types and their allies. And it is very important that we weigh in and that we get other countries to weigh in on behalf of those more moderate forces that espouse tolerance, that espouse dignity for all Syrian citizens, and they are out there. And for that reason, Secretary Kerry in Rome announced a new package of assistance. I am happy that the Congress, after our notification, has agreed that we can go forward with that. And so we will do things such as the following, Senator.

We will work with local councils that are under the Syrian Opposition Coalition and are actually providing some basic services. We will help them, for example, buy chlorine for drinking water. We will help them get flour for bakeries. Extremists thrive in the kind of desperation that you have in areas where the government's control has receded and there is no state. These local councils represent a chance to preserve institutions of the state and prevent total anarchy. And so we are channeling a lot of this assistance, as we noted in the notification, to help exactly those moderate groups.

At the same time, the nonlethal assistance that we will provide to the Syrian Supreme Military Council, food rations and medical supplies, will help them reduce recruitment and pull recruits away from better financed extremist organizations. And so we need to weigh in with those groups that are espousing a more tolerant vision of Syrian society.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Casey.

Senator CASEY. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for having this hearing.

Ambassador Ford and both Assistant Secretaries, we are grateful for your presence here and your service to the country. I think we can expand upon that when it comes to your service, Ambassador Ford. You have been more than just diligent and determined and effective. You have been someone who has demonstrated the kind of personal courage that our country is so proud of.

I was in the Middle East last week and spent some time in Turkey but mostly focused on Syria, meeting with opposition folks and learning from them firsthand what they had experienced and

the horrors they lived through—they and their families—and learning about their perspective on what we have done or have not done in their view. It was very helpful to me to better understand what we are up against.

Second, I was also able to visit, as Senator Cardin was in February—the refugee camp, Kilis, on the southern border. This is a remarkable place in the sense that you have an entire city there where young children can go to preschool in one building. They can go to high school. There are places for women to do work. There are places for men to do work. Trash is collected. Law enforcement, an entire city set up as a refugee camp.

In one of the places we stopped, there was a group of women who were working together, some doing work of various kinds, some doing knitting and things that help contribute to the community and the camp. Right on the table next to the table where the women were working was a little baby. Like a good politician, I, of course, picked up the baby. But as I was holding that child, I was wondering, not in a profound way, but it just kind of reminded me what kind of Syria will that child experience in the future. Will it be a democratic Syria? Will it be, as we would hope it would be—and I know the aspirations of the people are consistent with that.

It is my view that frankly when it comes to the work of the Congress, I am not sure anyone has done enough on this subject. I am not sure the administration has. Ambassador, you and I have talked a lot, and I know how animated you get when someone says this has not been done or that has not been done because you have been part of the effort. But I think we all could be doing more at least in the sense of focusing on a strategy.

Senator Rubio and I have legislation, and I will not highlight all of it. But the name of it is the Syria Democratic Transition Act. It focuses on humanitarian aid or the increased humanitarian aid to the people, help for the armed opposition, nonlethal help for heavily vetted opposition folks. There is a sanctions element which is directed at the Central Bank and other individuals in addition to what the administration has already put in place. There is also, as part of the legislation, a plan for dealing with nonconventional weapons. That is just highlights.

There are two areas in the limited time that we have that I wanted to focus on: the ability of our Government to do a better job to get aid directly to the people, albeit with the restrictions that the United Nations has where aid has to flow through—by way of the law, flow through the host country.

Can you just give me a sense of whether or not we are improving our ability to get it directly to the people in the horror within which they live?

Second, more and better ways to provide U.S. support for the armed opposition, nonlethal support, as I indicated. I actually have called for stronger measures, but that is not in our legislation.

So if you could address both. I guess I would start with you, Mr. Ambassador, and maybe Assistant Secretary Jones could amplify that.

Ambassador FORD. Senator, getting aid in to the Syrian people is not easy, as you know, given the conditions on the ground there, the proliferation of armed groups, and the very real combat that is

going on. I met on Tuesday this week with people from an international nongovernment organization that is doing work in northern Syria, and they underlined how difficult the situation there is.

But there is more assistance getting into areas of Syria where the government no longer has control. It started off very slow and it was very difficult, but the networks are stronger now in April than they were, say, at the end of last year. At the same time, the United Nations is playing a very useful role trying to reach people in areas where the government is still in control, and in areas where the government is still in control, there are literally hundreds of thousands and millions of people in need.

And so both aspects, getting assistance to needy people in government-controlled areas and getting assistance to people in areas where the government does not control—both aspects are very important and we continue to work on that. In particular, we have talked to the United Nations and to other members of the Security Council about how to get help to the United Nations so that it can do more assistance from warehouses in Damascus across the country, even into areas where the government does not control. So they would have to cross the combat lines, as it were. And General Salim Idriss that I mentioned and the colonels, for example, have expressed their willingness to help with that and we have seen them do that and we need to see more of that.

Senator CASEY. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Johnson.

Senator CASEY. Maybe for the record—I know we are out of time. Assistant Secretary Jones, maybe you can just provide a written answer for the record. That would be helpful.

Ambassador JONES. Certainly.

Senator CASEY. Thank you.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—A written response was not received from Secretary Jones, but more information pertaining to Senator Casey's questions can be found in the responses by Ambassador Ford and Secretary Jones to questions submitted by Senators Menendez and Flake in the "Additional Material Submitted for the Record" section on page 45 of this hearing.]

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Johnson.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Ambassador, apparently you have just returned from the region.

We had a pretty sobering committee hearing on the growing and rapidly expanding humanitarian crisis. I think one of the issues is as much as we are trying to support those people, we are not getting a whole lot of credit for it. Can we do a little bit better job from that standpoint? What can you report in terms of the awareness of the Syrian people, you know, really how much we are trying to support them?

Ambassador JONES. Senator, maybe I can start to address that.

One of the difficulties we have—as you have said yourself, the need is enormous, which means that there are plenty of Syrians, many, many Syrians, that we are not reaching with our assistance, we being the international community at large, not only the United States. But at the same time, we want very much for the Syrian

people to know just how much the American people are providing them in the assistance that we are sending either through the United Nations or now through the Syrian Opposition Coalition and their organization, the assistance coordination unit.

So we ask the implementing partners with whom we work to brand the assistance that we provide in some way so that it is clear that this comes from the American people. But at the same time, we want to be sure that as we ask them to do that, that doing so does not jeopardize them in some way or imperil the people with whom they are working. So we are very careful about how we do it, and if they do tell us that doing so would imperil their people, we ask them simply to be sure to include that in the reports that they write, et cetera, as to the source of the assistance.

But the other thing that we are doing now is we are doing little articles, lists, that kind of thing translated into Arabic and we are getting them out to lots and lots of contacts that we have within Syria to their computers, to their Skype, on Facebook so that in a broader, general sense that the Syrian people do know how much the American people are providing in much more specific terms.

And last, in the U.N. camps, for example outside of the UNICEF area, to which we have contributed, the United States is now listed in big placards as one of the primary donors. So we make sure that even when our funding goes through the United Nations where the donors are not usually named, we are now named in that respect.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you.

Again, I really wanted the reaction from the Ambassador in terms of potentially the growing hostility of the people of Syria that they realize that America can help and we are not. That was certainly one feedback we got from that hearing as well, that it is not just generalized people frustrated but, I mean, possibly a growing hostility toward America that we are not helping the way we should. Can you comment into what your sense is having just returned from Syria?

Ambassador FORD. Senator, I met with two members of the armed opposition from Aleppo. They are certainly appreciative of the kinds of assistance, nonlethal assistance, that we have talked to them about. Do they want more? Absolutely. But that is not to say that they do not appreciate what we have discussed doing with them in terms of nonlethal assistance.

In my discussions and Secretary Kerry's discussions with the Syrian political opposition Tuesday and Wednesday, again do they want more from us than we are doing? Yes. But are they appreciative of what we are doing? Absolutely they are, and they underline that.

Senator JOHNSON. What about Syrians in the refugee camps, I mean, people really suffering?

Ambassador FORD. Again, Senator, they would like to be able to go home. They want the regime to stop the violence, and they want to be able to go home. And they are frustrated that there is not a magic key solution to answer that problem, to unlock that door. So a lot of the frustration that you hear, Senator, is frustration that there is not a simple solution. They think that the United States can wave away the problem, and of course, we all know that it is much more difficult than that.

Senator JOHNSON. Can you just quick speak to the strength of the Assad regime? If Bashar al-Assad falls, I mean, is that any guarantee that the regime falls?

Ambassador FORD. No, Senator; it absolutely is not. In fact, my sense is that only through outreach to the regime's supporters, to the Alawi community that fears another Rwanda, to the Christian community that fears a repeat of the bitter Christian experience in Iraq, only through guarantees and reassurances from both the political opposition and the armed opposition will you be able to peel those people away. And short of that, the regime still has some fight left in it. It is gradually losing a war of attrition, but it is very gradual and it is very bloody.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador and Mr. Chairman.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And to the witnesses, I want to pick up right where Senator Johnson left off. Ambassador Ford, on that point, to the extent that this is seen as a survival fight by the Alawites, that is a very different kind of a challenge. And so the issue of what happens in the aftermath of an Assad, if there is a worry about some sort of a, you know, ethnic purge of that segment of the population, then this fight will go on for a very long time. You indicated that you would like to see some outreach to that portion of the Syrian population. Is that outreach going on? And talk about the status of them.

Ambassador FORD. This is an area where we spend a great deal of effort, Senator. I am encouraged that a significant group of Alawis met in Cairo 3 weeks ago and for the first time ever issued a statement urging their Alawi compatriots to give up on the regime and to join the opposition. And I look forward to working with people like that. I think all of the Friends of Syria look forward to working with a group like that. We will be organizing ourselves, meetings in the coming week with people from both the Alawi and Christian communities to talk about what kinds of guarantees they would need in the negotiation to get to a Geneva-type framework and a transition government without Bashar al-Assad.

So I think there is a lot we can do there, and I sense that it is moving as bit by bit the balance on the ground tips against the regime. But the faster that happens, the faster we can get to the kind of doable negotiated political settlement.

Senator KAINE. And is it the case that a disproportionate segment of the military leadership is Alawi?

Ambassador FORD. It is absolutely true. I heard, when I was Ambassador there, that something like 70 percent of the officers were Alawis.

Senator KAINE. So in terms of the prospect for any sort of a negotiated end to this, if the Alawi population feels like it is—you know, they face a Rwanda, they face a Balkans, they face some kind of an ethnic purge of that population in the aftermath of Assad, this will continue to be a survival struggle that is pretty much unresolvable unless and until the opposition successfully courts more Alawi support.

Ambassador FORD. This is exactly why, Senator, we say there needs to be a negotiated political settlement because if there is not

a negotiated settlement, our sense is that regime supporters, fearing death, would fight to the death.

I want to emphasize here—and I think this is important—that while we express concern about the Alawi community and the Christian community, we also in no way mean to minimize the suffering of the majority of the population. The suffering has just been enormous, and we have all seen it on television. And we have repeatedly denounced bombings and Scud rockets that have leveled entire blocks of some cities. So I do not mean to say that in some way the Alawis suffer a special threat. Frankly, all Syrians are under threat because of the violence. And so we want to encourage Syrians themselves in the opposition, both political opposition and armed opposition, who themselves understand the importance of bringing the country together. And they are out there, and these are the people that we seek to work with, for example, with the new programs paid for by the funding that the Congress generously has agreed to.

Senator KAINE. We had a fairly extensive Armed Services hearing this morning with General Breedlove, who is the incoming European Command and NATO Supreme Commander nominee, and spent some time in that hearing talking about Russia. Let us switch to Russia for a minute.

What are the circumstances that you might imagine that would alter Russia's equation with respect to its current level of support for the Assad government?

Ambassador JONES. Senator, it is hard to know what the answer to your question is. It is a very good question. We spend a considerable amount of time and effort talking with our Russian colleagues, trying to understand what they see their long-term goals in Syria to be, trying to work that into, Would it not be better for you to join us in working toward a negotiated settlement now to end the terrible suffering of the Syrian people? Would it not be better to use your influence with Assad to get him to have members of the regime without blood on their hands to come to the table along the lines of the framework of the Geneva communique? For reasons that I find difficult to explain, we have not been able to persuade them that it is in their fundamental interests to move now to this negotiation rather than wait for many, many more thousands of Syrians to be killed.

Senator KAINE. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator McCain.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, I guess in response to your last statement, Ms. Jones, I have read for 2 years in your official publication, the New York Times, how confident that you were that Russia would take Bashar al-Assad. We rode that horse for nearly 2 years. So I am glad that you still have some optimism that Vladimir Putin will somehow come around. I do not know what it takes for you all to understand that he is not going to take Bashar al-Assad.

And, Ambassador Ford, you and I have been talking to entirely different people. I have met with the leadership. I met with military and civilian leadership, the Syrian opposition. I have been to the refugee camps. They are angry and bitter at the United States of America for not helping them. And if I put myself in their shoes,

I would be exactly the same way. And for you to assert that somehow they are appreciative—not appreciative, Ambassador. Angry and bitter.

The woman, one of the leaders of the refugee camp in Jordan, said, “Senator, see these children? See these children? They are going to take revenge on those who refuse to help us and help them.” The breeding of Palestinian type refugee camps in these countries of Lebanon and Jordan, which all of us agree are in great danger of being destabilized because of this unending flow of refugees—estimates are by the end of this year there could be as many as a million in these small countries.

So, Ambassador, you and I have been talking to—or they have been given different versions. But I have been talking to the leadership of the Syrian opposition, both military and civilian. And I understand why they are angry and bitter. I understand that because we have watched 80,000 people being massacred, hundreds of thousands of refugees, and we have given them MRE’s with an expiration date of June. And I can understand why a fighter in Syria is not comforted by the fact that he might get a flak jacket especially when he is being pounded with Scud missiles and air power and trained mercenaries who have been taken to Iran and sent back now by the thousands to kill, massacre, and torture the Syrian people while we decide we might give them nonlethal aid while the arms from Iran and Russia pour into Syria to prop up Bashar al-Assad.

Which brings me to the subject of air power. Both Admiral Stavridis and General Mattis both said that we have testified—we have the capability to protect a no-fly zone with use of standoff weapons and with Patriot missiles. Would you support such an action to establish a no-fly zone, given the parameters that Admiral Stavridis, who is the outgoing head of NATO, and General Mattis of Central Command who both said that with standoff weapons, we could take out much of the air force, and with Patriot missiles we could ensure a no-fly zone? Would you agree with that, Ambassador Ford?

Ambassador FORD. Senator, I am economist. I am not a military strategist. So—

Senator MCCAIN. Wait a minute. You are supposed to know the situation on the ground. You were the Ambassador there. If anybody is supposed to know what is going on in Syria, it is you. So for you to answer me that you are an economist, then maybe you are not doing—you are suited for a job as an economist over in the State Department, not as a lead on Syria.

Ambassador FORD. Senator, I cannot argue with professional military officers about what their military assets can and cannot do. What I can tell you, Senator, is that—

Senator MCCAIN. I am not asking to argue with the military experts. I am asking you your opinion as to whether we should and could and should establish a no-fly zone.

Ambassador FORD. The administration’s policy, Senator, has consistently been that only a negotiated political settlement will provide a durable and sustainable end to the Syrian crisis.

Senator MCCAIN. That is really entertaining because the only way that there would be a negotiated settlement is if Bashar

al-Assad thinks that he is going to lose. And right now, with the use of Scud missiles and with fighter aircraft, he is able to neutralize to a large degree the capabilities of the Syrian resistance. We all know that. That is obvious. I do not think you have to be a general to understand that.

Ambassador FORD. Senator, the balance on the ground already has changed against the regime, and if you look at a map of what the regime controls now compared to what it controlled 4 or 5 months ago, you will see that the armed opposition has made steady, slow but steady gains. And if you were talking to the same people from the armed opposition that I was speaking with, they would report that to you, whether it be in the south along the Jordanian border or up in the north along the Turkish border, or out east along the Iraqi border.

Unquestionably, the regime's use of air power has caused massive numbers of casualties. We condemn that. But in the end, Senator, only a negotiated political solution will provide a sustainable and durable solution.

Senator MCCAIN. I do not know what to say. I do not know what to say to you, Ambassador. Negotiated settlements come about when people believe they cannot win. And it has been going on for 2 years now, and the administration for over 2 years has said Bashar al-Assad is going to go. I agree with that. At what cost? Should we not do something that would prevent this massive slaughter that is going on? Should we not do something to accelerate that?

And you think that nonlethal assistance is somehow going to accelerate Bashar al-Assad's departure? There were people in your shoes, including you, that predicted a long time ago that Bashar al-Assad was going to go. He has not. He has not because the Iranians and the Russians have stepped up their assistance. Those are the facts on the ground. Yes, there has been an erosion of his position. But how long will it take? How many more have to die? How many more have to be tortured? Without us doing what is obviously called for without the risk of a single American life—and that is to neutralize their air force and to establish a no-fly zone in Syria. And until that happens, you are going to see this blood-letting continue despite the fact that 2 years ago you and the State Department said the answer is for Russia to take care of Bashar al-Assad. Over 2 years ago, you have been saying that. I would think that maybe you would sing a different tune.

I have no more questions.

The CHAIRMAN. If you choose to respond to that, you are welcome to. If not, we will move on to the next panel.

Ambassador JONES. Let me just make one more try.

What the administration is working on is to look at every available, practical, and responsible means to end the conflict and to make it possible for the Syrian opposition, both the civilian and the military, to be responsible leaders of their communities in Syria.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much for your testimony before the committee. We appreciate it. We look forward to continuing to work with you, and with the thanks of the committee, we will excuse you at this time.

Let me, as we excuse this panel, call up Ambassador Dennis Ross who joins us to provide his perspective on the crisis in Syria and its implications for the Middle East. Ambassador Ross is the counselor at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. He has served in senior Middle East positions for Presidents Obama, Clinton, and George H.W. Bush, and we are pleased to have him with us to provide his perspectives.

Ambassador, if you would put your microphone on, your full statement will be included for the record. We would love you to summarize your statement to around 5 minutes or so, and then we will engage in a conversation

STATEMENT OF HON. DENNIS ROSS, COUNSELOR, WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY, WASHINGTON, DC

Ambassador ROSS. Thank you. That is what I would like to do. I did submit a statement for the record. What I will do is I will talk off of it and maybe go through some of the highlights.

I have listened carefully to the preceding panel, and much of what I want to cover, obviously, has been addressed. But maybe I can address it with a somewhat different perspective and maybe framing it a little bit differently.

If anything came through in what you have just described and, obviously, as you have been investigating this yourself, we face a terrible set of challenges within Syria. There is no doubt there is a humanitarian catastrophe that is going on. You are looking at probably around 80,000 dead right now. Maybe as much as a quarter of the population has been displaced either within the country or outside the country. So just from a moral standpoint, we are looking at something that is creating its own imperative to do something more.

But there also is a reality that our interests are being affected as well. This outflow of the refugees threatens to destabilize every one of the neighboring countries. And by the way, when you have this kind of an outflow, you look at a country like Iraq or you look at a country like Lebanon, one of the risks that we are going to see is a reemergence of the sectarian conflicts that each of those countries had. We had hoped the sectarian conflicts in Lebanon and Iraq had been relegated to the past. I do not know we should be so confident right now because I think the potential spillover effect from Syria every day that goes by in this conflict is going to make it more likely. That is not to say that it does not affect Jordan because clearly the numbers going in there are imposing a burden on Jordan that are very difficult. Turkey and obviously not so much refugees as it relates to Israel but a border that was once secure is not secure. So at a certain level, we are facing what amounts to being both a humanitarian crisis but we are also facing increasingly a crisis and a threat that takes on a national security character to it.

And one of the things I wanted to mention about this is if you look at our history, we have always had in foreign policy two schools of thought. We have had an idealist school of thought and we have had a realist school of thought.

The idealists always felt that the only time you should intervene internationally, particularly with force or something short of that

with a significant American involvement, is when there is a strong humanitarian, moral need to do so, in other words, when our values are at stake. And they looked at historical cases like Rwanda and felt this was a blight on our conscience. We should have intervened. We could have prevented a genocide. They looked at the Balkans as we intervened, but we intervened later than we should have. And they looked at Libya as something that was appropriate to do.

And you have a realist school of thought, and the realist school of thought always felt the last thing you do is intervene because of values. You do not intervene because of moral reasons. You intervene because of very concrete, tactical interests or tangible interests where you are, in effect, dealing with a certain reality, that there is a fundamental threat to an important ally. Maybe there is a threat to the flow of oil more generally. Maybe there is a threat to our standing internationally if we do not do it. And they looked at something like the first gulf war as being an appropriate point of intervention, and they look at maybe the Iraq war as something that they would have disagreed with or even the Libyan intervention as something they would have disagreed with.

Now, the reason I raise these two kinds of historical schools of thought. It is very hard to find particular cases here you will see the idealists and the realists come together. But in Syria they do precisely because what we are facing right now is not only a moral imperative because of the humanitarian catastrophe, but also we are looking at what is a real strategic threat and not only as it relates to a broader destabilization of the region and nearly all the countries that surround Syria, but also because increasingly if Syria fragments—and that is the direction that we are headed in—if al-Qaeda establishes a base there, if there is all loss of central control, those chemical weapons that exist today are going to fall into somebody else's hands, and it is going to require us either to do something before that happens or, as the President has said, that is a game changer.

My concern is that we are headed toward that almost inevitably given what we see happening on the ground, and precisely because of that, it leads me to the conclusion that we are going to have to do much more. And I will quickly summarize three areas where I think we have to do more, and then we can have a discussion.

One, we have to affect the balance of power not only between the opposition and the regime, but within the opposition itself. And here fundamentally the fact is those who we would favor complain consistently that they are not getting the arms and they are not getting the money, and the radical Islamists are the ones who are. So that is the first recommendation I would make, and we can get into a deeper discussion on it. I do believe we have to provide lethal assistance.

The second point I would make is I think we have to do much more in the area of protecting the Syrian public. I am in favor of a no-fly zone, but I would suggest if it is the kind of no-fly zone that Senator McCain was talking about, if that is something that is considered too difficult, there could still be a no-fly zone on the cheap, which is you employ the Patriot batteries along the border between Turkey and Syria and you basically declare that any

airplane that flies within 50 miles of the border will be deemed to have a hostile intent. Assad would then have to think about whether or not he really wants to risk challenging that. The attrition of his own air force at this point would make him think twice I think, and it would provide significant protection at least for the north, including a city like Aleppo.

I would also do more in terms of the humanitarian assistance. Robert Ford was talking about how difficult it is and all the things we are trying to do to expand the reach, including specifically to the Syrians who are displaced within Syria but living in that part of Syria that the regime does not control, which increasingly is looking about 60 percent of the territory. And because the United Nations finds it difficult for reasons Senator Casey mentioned to be able to deal with the areas outside—or not to deal with—they feel they have to work through the regime, dealing with the areas that the regime does not control increasingly gets short shrift.

All right, the third recommendation. Without wanting to make it a self-fulfilling prophecy, meaning I do not want to accelerate the process of disintegration and fragmentation of the Syrian state because I think we will pay for that in time, I still feel we have to hedge our bets because we are pretty late in the day, and I think we need a containment strategy. I often say that the Las Vegas rules do not apply to Syria. What is in Syria is not going to stay in Syria. And that simple reality means we better think increasingly about how you build a containment strategy. And here I would suggest we begin to focus on, given the localized nature of much of the rule, can we create buffers in different parts of the country to foster a kind of containment.

Now, why do I not stop there and we can get into a discussion. [The prepared statement of Ambassador Ross follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR DENNIS ROSS

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, and members of the committee, thank you for the invitation to testify today on U.S. policy toward Syria. There can be no doubt that the ongoing conflict in Syria confronts us with terrible challenges. A humanitarian catastrophe gets worse by the day, as nearly a quarter of Syria's population may now be displaced internally or externally and the death toll of close to 80,000 continues to rise inexorably. But it is not just our conscience that is affected by this gruesome war. Our interests are also engaged because the conflict is unlikely to remain confined to Syria. Indeed, the more Syria unravels, the more the state comes apart, the more refugees flee to the neighboring states—the more each of Syria's neighbors will be threatened with increased instability.

Even assuming that al-Qaeda does not establish itself in what may be the emerging failed state of Syria, the refugee flow already constitutes a growing danger to Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq. None of these states can easily absorb the numbers—and in the case of Lebanon and Iraq, the sectarian differences may rekindle civil conflicts we'd hoped had been relegated to the past. Turkey may face less of a problem in this regard and may also be more capable of managing the growing influx of refugees, but it, too, is facing growing difficulties in absorbing the numbers and managing the camps. Already there have been riots in the camps and we should not assume these are one-time events.

But, of course, it is not just the flow of refugees that endangers Syria's neighbors and the region. The disintegration of the Syrian state at some point means that it will no longer have centralized control of the chemical weapons there. If nothing is done beforehand to gain control of the weapons or destroy them, it is not only Syria's neighbors that will be in grave danger.

The point is that the Syrian conflict challenges our values and our interests. In our tradition of foreign policy, we have often seen two schools of thought: the idealist and realist. The idealists have been driven by moral and humanitarian concerns. They see U.S. interests engaged when our values are threatened. They justify Amer-

ican intervention, to include the use of force, when there is a high moral purpose; for the idealists, Rwanda represented an unforgiveable blight on our conscience. Idealists would argue that we should have acted militarily to prevent genocide. In their eyes, we were late in intervening in the Balkans and right to do so in Libya.

Realists, on the other hand, argue that we should only intervene when we have tangible, vital interests at stake. They view humanitarian interventions as costly, embodying an emotional binge that inevitably comes back to haunt us—making us even less capable of intervening when our interests are actually engaged. For the realists, we should only intervene when we are directly threatened, or when a strategic ally, the wider flow of oil, or our broader credibility is at risk. The first gulf war met the test; the Iraq war and Libya did not.

It is rare that idealists and realists find common ground and agree on threats. Ironically, Syria is a place where the idealists and realists should come together. There is a moral imperative to try to find a way to affect what is happening on the ground, but there is also a strong national security imperative at least to contain the conflict in Syria, ensure that its CW do not disappear, and prevent the neighborhood from being destabilized.

When described in this fashion, it all seems so clear. The problem, of course, is that we are emerging from over a decade of war—having spent a great deal in blood and treasure—and Syria is both literally and figuratively a mess. The opposition has never been coherent. Indeed Islamists have now seemingly gained the upper hand within the opposition. The non-Sunni minorities fear what would come after Assad, who for his part has stoked the sectarian conflict in an attempt to preserve his regime.

The zero-sum nature of the conflict, with the Assad regime having killed and displaced so many of his own citizens, makes it hard to create a political process that brings elements of the opposition together with members of the regime who don't have blood on their hands. The continuing Russian protection of the Assad regime also inhibits the likelihood that he will choose to go before the opposition succeeds in getting to him. And, as long as he remains, it is highly unlikely that there will be a political process.

The fact that from an idealist and realist point of view we have a great stake and need to influence what is happening on the ground does not make any of these problems easier to deal with. That said, it is hard to see how we have a choice. President Obama has said that the use of chemical weapons—or the loss of control of the CW—would be a game-changer. Given the direction of the conflict, it is hard to believe that sooner or later we are not going to be faced with such a situation.

So what can and should we do now? We need to focus in the following three areas. First, on what can be done to change the balance of forces not only between the opposition and the regime but, more importantly, within the opposition itself. Second, we need to do more to protect the Syrian population. And third, we need to focus on containing the conflict so that it does not spread outside of Syria and destabilize the neighborhood.

With regard to the first, if you talk to any secular member of the opposition—as I have—they will tell you that when it comes to money and arms, they simply are not getting what the Islamists are getting. Some may argue that the Islamists—like Jabhat al-Nusra—have proven themselves through fighting more than any of the secular forces. That is probably true, but they have also had the means to do so. Reports that the Saudis may be diversifying who they provide arms to now may be true. Similarly, the fact that the British and the French seem inclined to do more is good, but the reality is that if we are to have influence, we will have to provide lethal assistance as well as nonlethal aid. Additionally, it is important for us to try to work with others to improve governance in areas where the opposition groups have gained control. But if we are going to influence the landscape and the outcome, arms must be part of the equation. There is no reason we cannot identify those we are prepared to support and test the commitments they make to us as well as their ability to control and account for the arms we provide. Indeed, the quality and quantity of arms we give can be calibrated to reflect their performance on their commitments. Put simply, it is an illusion to think that we will be able to affect the realities on the ground without providing lethal assistance.

Second, we need to do more to respond to the need of the Syrian public. This has two dimensions: protection on the one hand and meeting their humanitarian needs on the other. While I personally favor a no-fly zone and don't believe that it runs the risks that some have identified, I would at least do what I call a no-fly zone on the cheap. Both we and our NATO allies now have Patriot batteries on the Turkish-Syrian border and I believe we should declare that any Syrian military aircraft flying within 50 miles of the border will be deemed to have hostile intent, and will be shot down. Would Assad challenge this? He would do so at high risk and at a

time when the attrition of his air forces has to be a factor in his calculus. Fifty miles would offer protection from air assaults in Aleppo—and effectively create more protection for areas where opposition forces are in control. It would have the additional benefit of doing something meaningful to protect Syrian civilians and finally signal that we are not prepared to sit aside and do nothing in the face of the indiscriminate use of force against them.

As important as it is to offer protection, it is also clear that more must be done to meet the basic humanitarian needs of the Syrian people displaced by this conflict. The United Nations only belatedly has begun to provide assistance that does not go through the Syrian regime—which necessarily denies aid to those areas outside of its control. Today, the regime controls less than 40 percent of the country. To the credit of the administration, it has been working through NGOs outside of the regime's control, but we must find ways to unilaterally and through our international partners expand significantly the assistance that is going to the Syrian people. The sad truth is that most displaced Syrians within the country are not receiving anything close to what is needed—conveying again what appears to be the indifference of the international community to the war that is being waged against Syria's civilian population.

The third requirement of our policy now is to hedge against the disintegration of Syria. I often say that the Las Vegas rules don't apply to Syria; what takes place in Syria won't stay there. Without making the fragmentation of the country a self-fulfilling prophecy, we need a containment strategy. Much of the opposition is highly localized. We need to think about how buffers can be built up at least in southern Syria, along part of the Syrian/Iraqi border and in the north. Investing in local governance—as part of a coherent design with the British, French, Saudis, Emiratis, Jordanians, Turks, and others—may be a way to hedge against the unknowns of the future and build the stake of those in Syria to stay put and shape their own future. I don't suggest that devising a containment strategy will be easy, but we have an interest in doing so and many of our allies, particularly those in the gulf, do as well. And, the Saudis and Emiratis certainly understand this may be a necessary buffer for to ensure their protection as events unfold.

With all the difficulties and unknowns that presently exist in Syria, one thing is clear: while there are surely costs in acting, the costs of inaction at this point are growing by the day. We may soon face a reality where what the President has declared as a game-changer takes place. Positioning ourselves to try to shape the landscape, and not simply react to changes in it, makes sense from the standpoint of our interests. But it also makes sense from the standpoint of our values—and the sooner the better.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you for your insights, some rather thoughtful and provocative. Let me broach one or two of those with you.

Your observation that the Islamists have the arms and the money. And it seems that some of the most effective fighting that is taking place inside of Syria by the “opposition” seems to be the extreme elements who not only have the money and the arms but also the training from their al-Qaeda affiliations.

Ambassador ROSS. Right.

The CHAIRMAN. And so does that not, therefore, speak strongly to working to change the equation and that means helping those entities within the opposition who we identify? Ambassador Ford spoke to some of them who would share our values, and at the end of the day, helping them would change the equation that presently they face because Assad right now, as I said before, has a monopoly on air power and artillery power. And so, therefore, he believes he can continue on the road that he is on.

Ambassador ROSS. Yes. I completely agree with that, and I would offer a couple of observations.

No. 1, we have a stake in influencing the outcome in Syria, and if we do not provide lethal assistance, we are unlikely to be able to influence that outcome because you have to be able to also affect

the balance of forces within the opposition. And providing lethal assistance is probably the most significant measure of that.

I am afraid, if you take a look at the provision of nonlethal assistance, when you look at it, for example, what we provided in Libya, I think you will find ultimately while we tried to do a good deal in that regard, it did not have that much of an effect. So No. 1, if we want to affect the balance of forces; No. 2, if we want to affect the landscape and the outcome; No. 3, if we are already vetting those who are providing nonlethal assistance—and I listened very carefully to Robert Ford and to Beth Jones, all the things we are doing when it comes to trying to vet and ensure that our assistance goes to certain actors. If we know who those actors are already, why can we not also apply the same standard and provide lethal assistance to them? We can certainly not only try to hold them accountable to the commitments they make, but we can also calibrate what we provide. You start at a low level. If they perform and they live up to their commitments and if they can account for what they do with the weapons, then we can provide more. But the idea that we cannot provide lethal assistance I am afraid is going to increasingly make it likely that the wrong forces continue to gain the upper hand, No. 1, and No. 2, minimizes the likely influence we are likely to have in terms of trying to shape the landscape there.

The CHAIRMAN. On the no-fly zone, what about the risks? I understand, as you say, doing it on the cheap in a sense by Patriot batteries. But is there not a danger this becomes a slippery slope that draws us more deeply into the conflict? How do you mitigate against that danger?

Ambassador ROSS. Well, here I would say a couple of things as well.

I think we are going to be drawn in more anyway precisely because the President has identified a game changer. If you look at the direction and trend of this conflict, it has consistently gotten worse. It has consistently gotten more violent. Assad has consistently used greater and greater force, starting first with the air power, then with the Scuds. And if we say that Assad is going to go and you are going to lose all central control, what is going to happen to those weapons? I mean, at some point we are going to be drawn in anyway either to try to destroy those weapons or to try to seize those weapons. My attitude is if we are going to be drawn in anyway, why not try to affect things in advance of that? Why wait until you get driven to that point? No. 1.

No. 2. So that in a sense suggests there is already a slippery slope. But I would even say here one of the virtues of doing—if you do only the Patriot batteries, Assad can test that, but he is going to test it at a high price to him. You look at what is the level of attrition already with his air force, he is putting that at risk. Is there a risk that we might have to engage them more? Yes, there is a risk we might have to engage them more, but I believe we are headed that way anyway.

The CHAIRMAN. Finally, what exactly do you mean or put the flesh on the bones of what a containment strategy is.

Ambassador ROSS. What I mean by that is we should begin to invest in some of the localized leadership. We are already providing

certain assistance to some in the south and the north anyway. This cannot be done only by us. It is going to have to be done with the Saudis, with the Emiratis, with the British, with the French, the Jordanians, with the Turks, with others. We need to come up with a coherent approach about identifying those who are prepared to invest in who are also in some of the border areas, whether it is in the southern part of Syria, so you build up a kind of buffer there, and those who are there have, in a sense, a chance to sustain themselves and a stake in continuing to operate. You do it in the north. Maybe you do it in the Kurdish areas opposite Iraq. But you try to build up what amounts to certain kind of buffer areas as a way of trying to contain this. I believe you are going to find—certainly with the Saudis and the Emiratis, the last thing they are going to want is for this to spread outside. And so their stake in investing in what could be these buffer zones could be quite significant, and they have the means to do so.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Corker.

Senator CORKER. Thank you very much for your testimony. I find it really clear and focused, and I appreciate what you have brought to this hearing.

On the no-fly zone, we have had a lot of testimony about the difficulties of a no-fly zone, you know, in the face of thousands of defense mechanisms in a highly urbanized and populous areas. So you are talking about just a very narrow no-fly zone. And so it is not one that basically grounds the air force that Syria has. It is one then that is more of a safe haven. Would you describe the characteristics of the no-fly zone you are talking about?

Ambassador ROSS. I mean, I think you just captured what I meant by a no-fly zone on the cheap because that does not require us to go in and take out all the targets.

What Senator McCain was talking about was going in and taking out those targets. And I have to say personally speaking, I am sympathetic to that. But I understand that there are concerns that this becomes something that could be more expensive than we want. It could drag us in deeper than we want. I recognize that and I am saying, look, at a minimum let us do something that creates at least a safe haven. If you are providing protection so there cannot be air assaults on Aleppo, you are already doing something that is significant, and at a minimum, it does something else. It does send a message to the Syrian population.

I do think that there is profound bitterness toward us right now. I think maybe it is exaggerated bitterness. You would think there would be great bitterness toward the Russians, but there is bitterness toward us because there is the perception largely because there is a higher expectation about us, that we embody a certain set of values, and therefore, we should be there providing greater protection for them.

So at a minimum, in addition to the broader humanitarian assistance, I would like to see us do something like this because it will send a significant message as well.

One other point I did not make just because I was summarizing what the testimony was. You know, there is a relationship between what is happening in Syria and Iran. We want very much to

convince the Iranians to change their behavior not just on Syria but on the nuclear issue. And one of the problems we have at this point is, notwithstanding the fact that the President has been quite clear about the fact that he does not bluff and that all options are on the table, today I do not believe they think that we will actually use force. And the irony here is if you want diplomacy to succeed, they actually have to believe we are going to use force.

Our hesitancy in Syria, I think, plays to their perception that we will not. So the more we are prepared to do in Syria, the more I think we actually may affect the Iranian calculus in terms of the nuclear issue as well.

Senator CORKER. When you are talking about using force, again you are talking simply those batteries that are over the Turkish border? You are not talking about other types of force?

Ambassador ROSS. When I am talking about force vis-a-vis Iran, that is a different story. When I am talking a no-fly zone here, I am describing take those NATO batteries that are there and they have a kind of envelope of about 50 miles. And that means you actually cover a significant part of where the opposition has control today, but you also cover Aleppo, which is a major area where stopping the aerial bombardment there would be no small achievement.

Senator CORKER. So supposedly there are, quote, coordinated efforts to ensure that opposition groups that share European values and others are getting arms. And so when you talk about lethal assistance, many people say, well, look, there are plenty of arms flowing into the country. All of the opposition groups have these arms. Some of the trained al-Qaeda groups or Nusra groups—they are better fighters. I mean, they have been at this longer. They learned in Iraq how to conduct activities. Some of the others are just newer to the game. How would you respond to that?

Ambassador ROSS. Well, I would say two things.

I think some of that is fair, but again, I have spoken with someone who came out and then went back in who was from the Revolutionary Council in Homs, and he said something interesting. He said, you know, if Assad goes and the al-Qaeda types emerge here, we lost the revolution. But they have the arms and they have the money and we do not. We keep hearing about a lot of arms are coming in or we are getting communication equipment, and he said to me we do not see any of that.

So one of the problems is I think many of those who we are vetting now do not seem to be getting arms. You know, I read the stories about training taking place. I think that has begun belatedly, No. 1. No. 2, only recently do I think the Saudis have changed the focus of where they are sending arms. I think there needs to be a much more coherent approach in terms of trying to create one address on the outside providing assistance across the board, lethal and nonlethal. We constantly are harping on the opposition to become more coherent. I suspect that one of the things that needs to be more coherent as well is more coherent provision of lethal assistance, more coherent provision of training, more coherent assistance of intelligence and the like.

Senator CORKER. Thank you very much for your testimony and for being here today. I am sorry we have such a light number of Senators here. The day kind of ended and folks have gotten on

planes and headed home. But thank you very much. It has been very good.

Ambassador ROSS. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, your testimony is very important to us and, of course, to the record, and we expect to have you back at different times, if you will be so gracious as to come.

Ambassador ROSS. Sure.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Johnson.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Ambassador, what do you think the chances are that Russia would actually pressure Assad out?

Ambassador ROSS. I think they are very slim unless the Russians decide that the price to them is too high.

And I think one of the questions that I heard earlier was what could change the Russian behavior. I will tell you one thing that could change the Russian behavior. I think we need to work harder with the Arabs to basically say to the Russians, look, you can choose a relationship with Assad or a relationship with us, but you cannot have both. And what that means is we are going to stop all meetings with Russian representatives. That means across the board on all issues. Now, this is such a serious issue to us and it is so profound in terms of Arab interests, that we are simply not going to deal with you. I think that would get the Russian attention.

Senator JOHNSON. Do you see any movement on the administration's part to try and apply that kind of pressure?

Ambassador ROSS. I do not know if it has been tried or not, but I think there has been an effort for some time on the administration's part which made sense—and I supported it—to try to appeal to the Russians to work with us to create a transition because it is in both our interests. The fact is you would think—this is what Beth Jones was saying earlier. You would think that from a Russian standpoint not being in a position where being so identified with Assad and if Assad is going to be gone at some point and that will then have a consequence within Syria for their longer term interests, you would think they would move. But their behavior to date suggests that they think Assad is going to hold on longer than others may think and that they get some credit for this, and they do not think that they are paying such a price with the Arab world. And I think one way to change that calculus is for them to understand actually they are.

Senator JOHNSON. So let us talk about the staying power of the Assad regime. How great is it?

Ambassador ROSS. Well, I do think one of the things you were hearing before is that Robert Ford was saying is right to the extent to which the Alawis feel that this is a struggle for survival, they stick with him until the bitter end. And even if he were not there, they would still feel they have no choice. So I do think the creation of an Alawi group on the outside that begins to stake out a different position is very important.

I also feel it is very important to continue not only to work with those elements of the opposition that we have been working with who want to be inclusive to focus on how there can be certain kinds of assurances that they can continue to convey.

But I think also we need the Saudis who are seen and maybe the Emiratis who are seen as being so identified with the Sunni opposition. We need them also to be trying to reach out to the Alawis and to other minorities.

One of the problems we face is that the minorities—and it is not just the Alawis—it is the minorities in Syria today are very fearful of what comes after Assad. And so somehow, we have to work with others who are in this broader coalition internationally who have the means to demonstrate that, look, they understand the value of inclusiveness. They understand the importance of assurances. They see blood-letting in the aftermath of Assad does not serve their interests. I think this too needs to be part of a broader strategy. So we have to be working with those who I think have the means to provide assurances but maybe have not done so to date.

Senator JOHNSON. Are you seeing evidence of a group of Alawis forming?

Ambassador ROSS. What Robert Ford was saying is that you had an organization that had merged 3 weeks ago in Cairo, and this is a new development. I suspect they still represent a very small percentage of the Alawis, but it represents an enormous psychological threshold to cross for them to come out because Assad turned this into a sectarian conflict. The initial opposition was peaceful and it was not sectarian. He turned it into a sectarian conflict because he understood it was the only way to survive. Unfortunately, it was also something that would guarantee the destruction of Syria.

Senator JOHNSON. Kind of considering a no-fly zone, I do not expect a precise breakdown, but how has the slaughter occurred? Has it been air power? Has it been troops? I mean, how have the 80,000 Syrians lost their lives?

Ambassador ROSS. It is pretty hard to say that, but the use of air power when you have no real answer to it is a reminder of the power of the regime and the nonassistance from the outside. And so it is such a symbol at this point. Do I think that the air power is the source of most of the casualties? I do not. I think artillery and tanks are probably much more the source of a lot of the casualties. And then, look, there is just a lot of close-in fighting as well. But the regime has used artillery, tanks, and helicopters with a lot of fire power to exploit their advantages. They began to use air power more as they were finding they were less and less successful in terms of being able to prevent the erosion of the regime's power.

Senator JOHNSON. But would that not indicate that a no-fly zone would be less effective than we might hope?

Ambassador ROSS. Well, I am not saying it is a panacea, but I do think it would have a psychological effect. It might also have an effect on the balance of power. The balance of power is both objective and subjective, and you want to try to affect both. Well, this will also affect the subjective balance of power.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

The CHAIRMAN. Ambassador, thank you very much for your insights, and I share several of them. And we look forward to picking your brain a little further as we move ahead. With the thanks of the committee, we appreciate your testimony.

This record will stay open until the end of close of business tomorrow.

And with that, this committee hearing is adjourned.
[Whereupon, at 4:06 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF AMBASSADOR ROBERT FORD AND ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY
ELIZABETH JONES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. Can you please share with the committee what material efforts have been undertaken by our government to ensure the timely and effective delivery of humanitarian and other relief supplies to all at-risk populations in Syria, including vulnerable Armenian and other Christian minorities in the Aleppo area?

Answer. Millions have been forced to flee their homes to seek safety within the country or beyond its borders. According to the United Nations, 3 to 4 million people are now internally displaced and more than 1.3 million people are refugees. Should these numbers double or even triple by the end of 2013, the number of displaced would amount to nearly one-third of Syria's population.

We are seeing troubling signs that the increase in refugees is destabilizing the region. The Zaatari refugee camp is now Jordan's fifth largest city, hosting over 100,000 Syrian refugees. Syrian refugees in Lebanon now are around 10 percent of that country's population, threatening Lebanon's fragile ethnosectarian balance. UNRWA reports that over 40,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria have sought refuge in Lebanon, straining resources in already-packed Palestinian camp communities and further heightening tensions. Turkey now hosts over 250,000 Syrian refugees. Tens of thousands of refugees have also fled into Iraq.

To help address this growing humanitarian crisis, we are providing over \$400 million in assistance to those in need, including minority communities such as Christians and Armenians, across all 14 governorates in Syria and across neighboring countries. This money is being spent on emergency medical care and supplies, blankets, food, protection, clean water, and shelter. We are sending flour to 68 bakeries in Aleppo and sponsoring food and sanitation projects for the desperate families in Atmeh refugee camp. But this is not enough to meet the overwhelming need.

U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and the Government of Kuwait hosted a donor conference on January 30, at which donor nations pledged over \$1.5 billion to help Syrians in need. But the U.N. appeals for assistance remain only partially funded. Secretary Kerry and I are both personally pressing countries now to make good on their pledges.

Question. Can you please provide a detailed accounting, to the extent practical, of U.S. aid that has, to date, reached the Armenians and other Christian communities in and around Aleppo?

Answer. We do not track our assistance by the religion of the recipient because the provision of humanitarian assistance is based solely on vulnerability and need and not on any political, ethnic, or religious categories.

Question. In light of the massive destruction on the ground in and around Armenian populated areas, has the administration reached out, directly or indirectly, to U.S.-based, international, or local Armenian community organizations to help facilitate the delivery of humanitarian relief to these regions?

Answer. The U.S. Government continues to engage a host of religious communities and their leadership—including the Armenian Orthodox community—in order to identify and fulfill their humanitarian needs. However, we do not track our material assistance by the religion of the recipient. We also continue to discuss the crisis in Syria and the violence the Armenian community faces with the Armenian Orthodox Church in Syria and Washington. However, I am not aware of any efforts to coordinate humanitarian aid through Armenian groups as opposed to our humanitarian providers.

Question. Can you give us an update on efforts to protect Armenian and other minority populations in Syria?

Answer. To protect minority communities, we are preparing for a Syria without Assad by helping the opposition lay the foundation for a democratic transition that protects the rights of all Syrians and that fosters, rather than threatens, stability in the Middle East.

That is why we and our partners are helping build the Syrian political opposition, including by recognizing the Syrian Opposition Coalition as the legitimate rep-

representative of the Syrian people. Comprised of diverse representatives from inside and outside Syria, the coalition is committed to a democratic, inclusive Syria free from the influence of violent extremists. Supporting such entities is the best way to ensure that the Syrian state that emerges after the Assad regime is inclusive and representative and protects minorities, such as Armenians. We have urged the opposition to work together to proactively and constructively engage the full spectrum of Syrian society, and to respect and advocate for the rights of all Syrians. We believe that the majority of Syrians seek a unified, inclusive future for their country, and we have been gratified to see statements from the opposition calling for peace and harmony. We hope to see increased action by the opposition to implement their statements as its capacity grows.

We are also supporting the capacity of religious and community leaders within Syria to work together to prevent potential future conflicts.

Question. Out of all the countries that have accepted refugees from Syria, Armenia has the least amount of resources to provide for them. Would the administration be willing to provide funds to Armenia to help manage this burden?

Answer. The State Department is closely tracking the situation of Syrians in Armenia. The Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration's (PRM) contribution to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) supports assistance programs for refugees and asylum seekers in Armenia. Since May 2012, less than 10 percent of newly arrived Syrians, or about 500 individuals, have applied for asylum. In cooperation with the Armenian Red Cross Society, UNHCR has provided winter clothing and footwear to a total of 343 Syrian Armenians (225 adults and 118 children). A number of families have received support to cover utility costs. With funds provided by UNHCR, Mission Armenia has procured and distributed household items to 422 Syrian Armenians. Some of the most vulnerable families also received food packages and sanitary items. UNHCR supports a medical assistance program, through which over 200 Syrian Armenians have received medical treatment and/or medication. Finally, UNHCR is supporting the newly established NGO, the Center for Coordination of Syrian Armenian Issues, with some office equipment, furniture, and capacity-building. Similar support has also been extended to the Cilicean School No. 14, where Syrian Armenian children attend.

RESPONSES OF AMBASSADOR ROBERT FORD AND ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY
ELIZABETH JONES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JEFF FLAKE

Question. For decades Syria has been under the rule of authoritarian dictators who have opposed the United States at nearly every turn. The fall of the Assad regime will give way to an important strategic opening in the heart of the Middle East.

- How does the administration's current policy toward the conflict enable the United States to take full advantage of that strategic opportunity?
- Should the United States be unable to work with a transitional or future government of Syria, how does the administration plan to ensure that Assad's conventional and unconventional weapons do not end up in the wrong hands, as they have in Libya?

Answer. Saving the Syrian state from humanitarian disaster, extremist influences, or state fragmentation is critical to save lives and protect our interests and those of our partners in the region.

Many among Syria's minority communities, including Alawis, Druze, Christians, fear what the future holds. The Sunni majority is divided, fractious, and anxious to assert the rights so-long denied them by the Assad regime. Iran's role in the conflict is especially pernicious, as it helps the Assad regime build sectarian militias and attracts Hezbollah and Iraqi militias to Syria.

For Syria to survive and endure, it must find a path that cuts out such foreign interference and instead provides for a tolerant society that supports regional stability and ensures the dignity of the Syrian people. To effectively make the transition beyond the Assad regime, the opposition will need a vision for a pluralistic Syria that abides by the rule of law, subordinates the military to civilian authority, and guarantees the rights of all of its citizens while preserving continuity of the state and its institutions.

The Syrians have to do this for themselves—the international community cannot do it for them. What we can do is pave the way for this process. That is a large part of what the United States is doing now.

This transition assistance is both supporting the transition away from Assad and helping to ensure that it promotes human rights and tolerance.

The Assad regime has created an environment that fuels the growth of extremism, and al-Qaeda-linked groups are working to exploit the situation for their own benefit. There is a real competition now between extremists and moderates in Syria and we need to weigh in on behalf of those who promote freedom and tolerance.

Since December 2012, the United States, along with our international partners, has recognized the Syrian Opposition Coalition as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people. Comprised of diverse representatives inside and outside Syria, the coalition is committed to a democratic, inclusive Syria free from the influence of violent extremists.

We are providing \$117 million in nonlethal, transition assistance to the coalition and a range of local councils and grassroots groups inside Syria to build a network of ethnically and religiously diverse civilian activists from the top down as well as the bottom up. These funds are strengthening local councils, civil society groups, unarmed political activists, and free media to improve capacity, governance, accountability, and service delivery at the subnational and national level. We are laying the foundations for a future democratic Syria by supporting the capacity of Syrian citizens to advocate and organize around shared human rights concerns. We are supporting the mitigation of potential conflicts by assisting local religious and community leaders engage in reconciliation and dialogue.

As the opposition and Syrian civil society begin to address questions of accountability, the United States continues to work with Syrians and the international community to support the documentation of violations and discuss what future transitional justice processes, such as a tribunal, might look like. The United States is one of 40 countries supporting the Syrian Justice and Accountability Center (SJAC). The SJAC, led by Syrian human rights defender, Mohammed Al-Abdullah, focuses on: (1) Collection and analysis of documentation in Syria; (2) Coordination of Syrian and international; and (3) Education and outreach on transitional justice. The leadership of the Syrian people will be critical in addressing issues of justice and accountability in their transition.

The United States has supplied Syrian activists with thousands of pieces of communications gear. One group of lawyers used this equipment to form the Free Lawyers' Union, which has now taken responsibility for legal affairs within the Local Council for the Governorate of Daraa.

We boosted private radio station signals, extending the reach of broadcast on FM stations, and funded media outlets. Those media platforms were used to address sectarian violence and issue public service messages on best practices in the event of chemical weapons exposure.

The United States also trained over 1,500 local leaders and activists—including women and minorities—from over 100 different provincial councils. One recent graduate played a critical role in the Aleppo local council elections last month. He reached out to 240 delegates across Aleppo's liberated areas and broadcast the election—bringing credibility, transparency, and accountability to the process. These trainees are improving the ability of local committees and councils from Damascus to Deir ez-Zor in the east to Idlib in the northwest to better provide for the needs of all members of their communities.

We are not doing this work alone. From Norway to Australia, the U.K. to Korea, we are working across the globe with our partners to coordinate our efforts.

We are doing this work to empower the moderate elements, including the moderate armed groups such as the Supreme Military Council (SMC), including by providing them with food rations and medical kits for those in need, to ensure that conventional and chemical weapons do not fall into the wrong hands, now or after the conflict.

Question. The administration has been hesitant to take a proactive role in resolving the Syrian civil war, which has been going on for more than 2 years. However, the ongoing conflict is taking its toll on the region at large. The Wall Street Journal reported earlier this week that “Lebanon, divided along sectarian lines that support and oppose Syria’s regime, has become a logistical support base for the civil war next door.” This in turn has opened the door for violence inside Lebanon, spurring violence that is “pulling rival Sunni and Shiite factions [in Lebanon] into a confrontation that threatens to tear Lebanon apart.”

- Did the administration foresee this sort of instability? If not, what is it doing to mitigate the conflict from spreading all over the Middle East?

Answer. Lebanon’s official policy on Syria is one of “disassociation,” which was formalized in the June 2012 Baabda Declaration. The United States fully supports

Lebanon's stated policy of disassociation from the Syria crisis, and we remain committed to a stable, sovereign, and independent Lebanon.

We condemn any violation of Lebanon's sovereignty by Syria, noting the most recent fatalities from attacks in Hermel and al-Qasr in April. We stand by our long-standing commitment to UNSC Resolutions 1559, 1680, and 1701 and call on all parties to respect Lebanon's stability, sovereignty, and independence.

Our security assistance programs to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and Internal Security Forces (ISF) (\$106 million in FY12) are vital to our policy of bolstering Lebanon's stability and sovereignty and countering extremist influences, particularly in the face of immense tensions associated with the Syrian conflict. The LAF have acted to maintain peace and security inside Lebanon despite the increasing spillover effects of the crisis in Syria. The LAF have repeatedly intervened to prevent lethal clashes in Tripoli and other parts of the north from spiraling out of control. The United States continues its support to the LAF in logistics, sustainment of systems, mobility, personal equipment, weapons, and officer training as a means to equip them to address a broad range of challenges presented by the spillover effects from Syria.

We also continue our advisor police and corrections programs to enhance Lebanon's ISF capabilities. They have the mission of exerting sovereign authority throughout Lebanese territory to assure internal public order and security, and protect Lebanon's diverse population.

Question. The aid that has been provided to Syria and the Syrian Opposition Council from the United States has been devoid of U.S. markings or branding.

- Has the administration sent humanitarian and nonlethal aid to Syria in order to curry favor with the Syrian people or elements of the opposition, or is the goal here strictly to alleviate suffering?
- Does administration of this aid further any U.S. national security purposes?

The administration has expressed its reluctance to providing lethal assistance to the opposition because factions within that opposition, such as the al-Nusra Front, are allied with elements of al-Qaeda. However, in Afghanistan, the United States routinely provides all manner of assistance to the Afghan National Police, elements of which have also been infiltrated by the Taliban and other enemies to the United States.

- What are the criteria which the administration uses when determining what groups it will and will not provide assistance to?

Answer. Humanitarian assistance is provided to Syrians based on need and does not serve to advance a political goal. In line with Humanitarian Principles, this is provided to all those affected by the conflict in Syria, based on need and regardless of political affiliation. The United States is providing over \$400 million in Humanitarian Assistance for those impacted by the conflict in Syria and for those who have fled to neighboring countries.

In contrast to the neutral nature of our humanitarian assistance, our transition assistance is designed to strengthen the opposition, change the balance on the ground, and help hasten the departure of Assad. Some of our \$117 million in transition assistance provides for the same types of basic goods that would be provided under humanitarian aid but with a clear political purpose.

This aid furthers our national security goals and interests in Syria—namely preparing for a Syria without Assad by helping the opposition lay the foundation for a democratic transition that protects the rights of all Syrians and that fosters, rather than threatens, stability in the Middle East.

Since December 2012, the United States, along with our international partners, has recognized the Syrian Opposition Coalition as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people. Comprised of diverse representatives inside and outside Syria, the coalition is committed to a democratic, inclusive Syria free from the influence of violent extremists—as they have publically made clear on many occasions.

The same is true of the SMC. Recently, they released a statement stating: "We don't support the ideology of al-Nusra." The SMC has made clear that they reject extremists' ideology. "