

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

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

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

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

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is now closed.

The Senator from Pennsylvania is recognized.

SYRIA ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

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

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

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

training camps within a few miles of Damascus.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Minister Netanyahu initially made some statements that he was going to hold Syria accountable for Hezbollah on the southern Lebanon border. That resulted in a very tense situation with Syria realigning their troops along the Syrian border.

Prime Minister Netanyahu knew I was about to travel to Syria and asked me to carry a message to President Assad and Foreign Minister Shara, that Prime Minister Netanyahu wanted peace and was prepared to personally engage in discussions and would urge President Assad to engage personally, but that was not a condition.

I relayed that message to President Assad. While he was not willing to engage in negotiations with Prime Minister Netanyahu, it was later reported there was an easing of those tensions.

On many occasions, I would urge President Assad to have discussions with the Israeli Prime Minister. I soon developed a relationship where I was able to take it in a somewhat lighter vein and said to him when our pictures—he met with me in his office, with the large traditional chairs and a small stand in between to hold the tea or coffee—I said tomorrow there would be a picture in the Damascus newspaper of our discussion, but that if he would meet with Prime Minister Shamir, which I urged in the early 1990s, the picture would appear on the front pages of the New York Times and the London Times and across the world.

When the Nobel Peace awards were given to Prime Minister Rabin and Foreign Minister Perez and Chairman Arafat, I urged President Assad to engage in negotiations with Prime Minister Rabin. I said he would be honored at Oslo, and he responded in a light vein that he might be honored at Oslo but he would not be allowed back in Damascus. I told him I did not think that was true, and he commented notwithstanding what some might think, the public opinion in Syria was a matter of some substantial concern to him.

I attended the funeral of President Assad in the year 2000, accompanying Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. On that occasion, I had a chance to meet his successor, President Bashar Assad. I visited Syria on two occasions, in 2002 and last year in 2003, and have had lengthy conversations with President Bashar Assad. They are conversations which are candid and sometimes critical.

For example, at the Arab summit, when President Bashar Assad made a comment that Zionism was the same as nazism, I said I thought there ought to be a change in his attitude on that because there was no comparison between the brutality of nazism, their destruction, their attacking neighboring countries, their Holocaust, murdering 6 million Jews, and the aspirations of the Zionists to have a homeland in Israel. He listened and talked. To what extent there is an imprint, who knows. It is better to have it said than to have him

thinking he can simply equate nazism and Zionism without an objection.

President Bashar Assad also made a comment at the Arab summit that it was fair to target civilians in the Golan Heights, and I disagreed with him. He said, well, the civilians are armed. I said, they have to be armed because there are attacks on the borders. I urged him that the right response was to engage in diplomatic talks with the United States.

The essential conclusions which I have reached are there is some substantial opportunity to deal with Syria. In Bashar Assad there is a new leader, a man in his late 30s, English educated, willing to meet with the House of Representatives or the Senate, willing to listen. Notwithstanding my many exhortations of President Hafez al-Assad and President Bashar Assad, they continue to harbor terrorists in Damascus. Both the father and the son respond that the people live there have been exiled from what was formerly Palestine, they cannot be in Israel so they live in Damascus. I responded I thought that was an insufficient answer.

Although some progress has been made, I do believe Syria needs to do much more. Syria is the de facto controller of Lebanon, and Syria needs to do more to stop Hezbollah and their rocket attacks on Israel, with the tremendous armaments which Syria has. There are reliable reports about Syria developing bacteriological warfare, a lot of chemical warfare, and extending the range of their missiles, and some incipient efforts at nuclear weapons, so they would have to submit to international arms control regimes.

Most of all, I believe Syria has to do much more in the fight against terrorism. President Bush has said, and I think accurately, he who harbors a terrorist is a terrorist himself; he who harbors a terrorist in the eyes of the law is an accessory before the fact.

Today, the problem of terrorism is so acute there cannot be any halfway measures. Syria needs to do a great deal more on the border to stop terrorists from coming into Iraq.

There are reports about al-Qaida being in Iraq. I am not vouching for any of those reports. I think we have to be very careful what we say about terrorism and who the terrorists are and where they come from, but there is no doubt Iraq has been a magnet for young men and young women who do not like the United States, who do not like U.S. support of Israel, who do not like what we have done in Iraq, and they are coming into Iraq. There are daily attacks on our men and women. There are daily attacks on the Iraqis themselves.

There is a state of tremendous violence. Every day, when we look to the news media, we wonder if there is going to be another report about a helicopter being shot down or about United States soldiers being attacked or about Iraqi civilians being attacked. That means

the effort against that kind of terrorism has to be absolute. That is why I believe the Syria Accountability Act is one which ought to be passed by the Senate.

When the Syria Accountability Act was gaining in cosponsors, I wrote to President Bashar al Assad on September 17 of this year. I ask unanimous consent that the letter be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my statement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.
(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. SPECTER. President Assad then asked his representative in the United States, in Washington, his charge d'affaires—they didn't have an ambassador—to come and talk to me, and we had a discussion as to what was going on. It seems to me, after considering the matter and the gravity of the risks which our fighting men and women are undertaking in Iraq, and the risks to the Iraqi people themselves, that it is an appropriate time to make a formal demand on the Government of Syria to do more.

If they do more and if they join in the fight against terrorism, there is ample opportunity for the President of the United States to take the appropriate action pursuant to this resolution and to lift the sanctions.

I thank my colleague from Alabama for sitting overtime into the lunch period. I yield the floor and note we will now go into a noontime recess, to reconvene at 2:15.

EXHIBIT 1

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, September 17, 2003.

His Excellency BASHAR AL-ASSAD,

President, Syrian Arab Republic,

Damascus, Syria.

DEAR PRESIDENT ASSAD: I write to inform you of growing concern in the United States Senate about Syria and the fact that the Syrian Accountability Act now has 76 cosponsors. I had discussed this proposed legislation some time ago with your Ambassador to the United States. I had refrained from co-sponsoring the Syrian Accountability Act on the premise that we should try to work out the problems without resorting to legislation calling for sanctions.

Yesterday, Undersecretary of State John R. Bolton submitted testimony to the House of Representatives' International Relations Committee that Syria is permitting "volunteers" to pass over your border into Iraq where those so-called volunteers are intent on killing U.S. troops. This follows Administrator L. Paul Bremer's statement on August 20th that Syria is allowing "foreign terrorists" to cross Syria's borders into Iraq.

When you met with Secretary of State Powell last May, there was an understanding that Syria would shut Damascus offices of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other terrorist groups. In June, Secretary Powell stated that Syria's efforts to shut these offices were "totally inadequate".

The Bush Administration which had opposed the Syrian Accountability Act now is neutral, taking no position.

After extensive dealings with your father, President Hafez al-Assad, since the 1980s and with you on our meetings in the past several years, I have tried to assist in finding answers to these difficult problems. With the

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

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

Sincerely,

ARLEN SPECTER.

RECESS

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

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

SYRIA ACCOUNTABILITY ACT— Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

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

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

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