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GENERALLY SPEAKING; RETIRING GUARD CHIEF'S MISSION: "TAKE CARE OF THE TROOPS"

(By Jim Warren)

LEXINGTON, KY.—The pace of life is slower these days around Donald Storm's Elizabethtown home.

No more dashing to catch planes for Iraq. No more late-night phone calls about soldiers lost. No more need to put on the uniform.

After a 37-year military career, Storm, the former Kentucky adjutant general, is relearning civilian life.

Storm had hoped to be retained as adjutant general in the new administration of Gov. Steve Beshear. But the governor chose to replace him with Brig. Gen. Edward W. Tonini, 61, former chief of staff for the Kentucky Air National Guard.

Storm could have elected to remain in uniform, but that would have required him to move to another state guard program with a slot for someone of his rank, or take a post at the National Guard Bureau in Washington. But he chose retirement, and respite from the stresses and strains of commanding the Kentucky National Guard during its most difficult period in more than 30 years.

Storm did not escape controversy during his tenure, but is generally remembered for working hard to support the troops he led.

During his watch, the Kentucky Guard sent thousands of soldiers to Iraq and Afghanistan, losing troops in both countries. It sent units to Louisiana to help in the recovery from Hurricane Katrina, and dispatched about 1,000 soldiers to help monitor the U.S.-Mexico border in Operation Jump Start. Add peace-keeping duties in Bosnia, and Homeland Security assignments, and about 9,400 Kentucky Army and Air National Guard members were deployed over the course of Storm's tenure—more than the entire membership of the state guard when Storm became adjutant general.

Storm was the guard's chief of staff in December 2003, when incoming Gov. Ernie Fletcher appointed him to be adjutant general, succeeding D. Allen Youngman.

"Little did I know then that I would face some of the things I had to face," Storm said.

Sgt. Darrin Potter of Louisville, the first Kentucky National Guard member lost in combat since Vietnam, had died in Iraq about two months before Storm's promotion. Many others would follow during the next four years. Officially, 15 Kentucky Guard members were lost in combat while Storm was in command. He personally includes two others who were on inactive guard status when they were killed while working for private security firms in Iraq. Once a guard member, always a guard member, Storm believes.

Today, he admits that losing soldiers was the one part of his job he wasn't prepared for.

The period from March through September 2005 was particularly bloody, for example, with six guard members killed in action. That year also saw one of the Kentucky Guard's proudest moments, as members of the Richmond-based 617th Military Police Company fought off a furious insurgent attack on a convoy at Salman Pak on March 20, 2005. Three unit members, including a woman, were awarded the Silver Star. One of them, Sgt. Timothy Nein, later received the Distinguished Service Cross, the nation's second-highest military decoration.

But displays of undaunted courage could never offset the pain of lost lives. Attending funerals and consoling the families of lost

soldiers became an all-too-common part of Storm's job.

"Sergeant Potter had died," he recalled, "and then it was just one right after another."

It was particularly painful because Storm, through his many years in the guard, personally knew many of those who were lost.

"I'm going to admit that it took a toll on me," Storm said. "I don't think I fully understood how much of a toll it was at the time. But it was the toughest thing I ever went through . . . the losses of these soldiers and the tremendous sacrifices of their wonderful families. I just grieved with all of them."

Storm, a native of Laurel County, began his military career as an enlisted man, serving in Vietnam in 1971-72. He never planned to be a soldier—he says he just wanted to get a college education—but he quickly found that he liked the regimentation and the values of life in uniform. He joined the Kentucky National Guard after his Army enlistment ended. He was commissioned a first lieutenant in 1981, beginning a steady rise through the ranks. By the time Storm took over the top job, he had held virtually every major post in the Kentucky Guard.

Storm sometimes sounds like a social philosopher when he speaks on the importance of military service.

"Military power," he says, "is one of the four types of power you must have to support a nation state—information power, diplomatic power, economic power and military power. The fifth common denominator is the will of the people."

No one had to convince Storm that invading Afghanistan and Iraq were the right things to do. He said he had seen the plight of the common people in both lands and felt that liberating them was a proper use of American force.

He admits that he didn't expect the war in Iraq to drag on this long, though he says he knew it would be "a long hard road" once the insurgency kicked into high gear in 2004. But he says he was never discouraged, even when polls began to show declining citizen support for the war.

"I could see the light at the end of the tunnel, which was something that our people here at home didn't have the opportunity to see," he said. "I knew that if we stayed the course . . . that removing Saddam . . . would bode well for free people and the other countries in that part of the world."

Storm says he personally saw off every Kentucky guard unit as it left for the war zone except one (he was on his way to Iraq himself at the time), and greeted every unit when it came home. He made eight trips to Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait to visit Kentucky troops and encourage them.

"I tried to make it my business to meet as many of the soldiers as I could, and let them know how much the people of Kentucky appreciated their service," he said. "You know, it's not about generals. It's about soldiers and airmen."

Storm, however, drew some fire in April 2005, after a Kentucky Guard member in Iraq went public with complaints that his unit was saddled with old, inadequately armored trucks. It happened shortly after a Kentucky guardsman died when a roadside bomb detonated near his vehicle. Storm responded that he didn't agree with the soldier going outside channels to raise a complaint, but that he would work to get better equipment for Guard units in Iraq.

The adjutant general found himself in hot water again in March 2007, after an usual appearance in the State Senate, where he made a last-minute appeal in support of an income-tax break for Kentucky military personnel that was stuck in the State House.

Some House leaders, including Speaker Jody Richards, attacked Storm's comments as a "shameless, partisan diatribe." The Louisville Courier-Journal ran an editorial saying Storm should be replaced as adjutant general.

Storm maintains that his "whole deal" always was "to take care of the troops."

Nowadays, he believes the work and sacrifices of the soldiers in Iraq are beginning to pay off. He sees the decline in violence since last summer as proof that "we have turned the corner." The question, he says, is whether the improvement can be sustained as U.S. troops sent over for the "surge" start returning home in coming weeks.

"I pray that we can sustain this," he said. "You never know in that part of the world because there are so many factions to deal with."

"But, boy, it sure does look great now. And if we can pull it off, it would be one of the greatest accomplishments ever for world peace . . . because the enemy we face is real. They want to destroy the western world and all the freedoms we enjoy."

Storm won't be in uniform to see the victory he hopes for. But he says the biggest thing he will miss is simply serving in the Kentucky National Guard.

"The Kentucky National Guard is probably the best Guard unit in America," he says. "That's what some three- and four-star generals will tell you. And it's because of all these great Kentuckians who have stood up, particularly after 9/11, to serve the State and the Nation. I'm so proud of the way they answered the call."

REPORT ON FOREIGN TRAVEL TO THE UNITED KINGDOM, ISRAEL, PAKISTAN, JORDAN, SYRIA, AUSTRIA, AND BELGIUM

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I rise to comment about a trip which I made over the recess during the period from December 22 of last year to January 4 of this year on travels which I undertook with visits to the United Kingdom, Israel, Pakistan, Jordan, Syria, Austria, and Belgium.

The stop which Congressman PATRICK KENNEDY and I made in Pakistan was an extraordinary visit, a shocking visit, and a visit at a time of great tragedy.

On Thursday, December 27, Congressman KENNEDY and I were scheduled to meet with Benazir Bhutto in Islamabad. She had set the meeting for 9 p.m., at the end of a busy day of campaigning. While we were preparing to go that night to an earlier dinner with the President of Pakistan, President Musharraf, and then plans to go on to meet with Benazir Bhutto, we were informed, within 2 hours of our planned meeting with Ms. Bhutto, that she had been brutally assassinated. It was obviously a great shock, a great loss to Pakistan, obviously, a great loss to her family, and really a loss to the world because she had the unique potential to unite Pakistan and to provide leadership in a very troubled country.

Pakistan has nuclear weapons, and it is an ongoing matter of concern as to whether those nuclear weapons are being adequately protected. President Musharraf assured us that they were. So did the Chairman of the Joint

Chiefs of Staff. And we accept those assurances. But with Pakistan in a condition with militants there, there is always the worry and concern, and it would be reassuring, comforting, if there can be political stability in Pakistan. It is our hope that will occur with the oncoming elections.

But whether Benazir Bhutto would have emerged as Prime Minister, as the leader, remained to be seen. But certainly she had extraordinary potential. Those who have seen her on television know she was a movie star, beautiful, charismatic, and beyond those features, a great intellect, educated in the United States, at Radcliffe, of course, at Harvard, Oxford—a real intellectual and a real leader in the political sphere. Her father had been Prime Minister. She had been Prime Minister.

I had the opportunity to meet her some 20 years ago when my wife and I visited her at her family home in Karachi. She was a very disarming young woman. When I took some pictures of her, she asked if I would send her copies. She said nobody ever sent her copies of pictures which were taken. I was surprised, really sort of amused, because she was on the cover of *People* magazine at that time. You only had to pick up most any magazine on the stands and find a picture of a glamorous, beautiful, talented Benazir Bhutto.

I visited her when she was Prime Minister in Islamabad in 1995. I discussed with her the possibility at that time of having the subcontinent nuclear free. Senator Hank Brown and I carried a message from the Prime Minister of India, Prime Minister Singh at that time, to have the subcontinent nuclear free. Then I had seen her from time to time in Washington. Beyond any doubt, she had the power to and the potential to be a great leader in Pakistan and the great potential to be a stabilizing force.

I learned after she was assassinated, according to members of her own party, that she had planned to give Congressman KENNEDY and me some documentation about the likelihood of vote fraud. I have sought information on those matters.

I ask unanimous consent that at the conclusion of my statement, the full text of a lengthy 40-page report be printed in the *RECORD*, together with copies of the letters which I have sent to her family and to her political allies making inquiries about the information on vote fraud which reportedly she was interested in turning over to Congressman KENNEDY and me.

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

(See Exhibit 1.)

Mr. SPECTER. With the assassination of Ms. Bhutto, it seems to me there is a need for an international investigation. By letter dated January 2, before returning to the United States, I wrote a letter to the Secretary General of the United Nations urging that there be an international investigation be-

cause of the obvious concerns as to whether security was involved or the kinds of conspiratorial theories which arise, whether there is any basis for them.

President Musharraf of Pakistan had asked for assistance from Scotland Yard. My own view is that was insufficient because Pakistan would retain control of the investigation, but that would certainly be a step in the right direction.

I supplemented that letter to the Secretary General on January 17, 2008, with a suggestion that the United Nations put into operation a standing commission to investigate international assassinations. The importance of immediate action and investigation is well known—to get to the scene, to preserve the evidence to the maximum extent possible, and to question witnesses while their memories are fresh and before they are potentially intimidated. Some of the doctors who attended Benazir Bhutto reported they had been told not to talk to the media. I think these ideas are ideas which are worth pursuing.

The composition of the standing commission would have to be very carefully thought through. There would obviously be exemptions for nations which are capable of carrying on an investigation with the technical expertise and which would have the confidence of the public, but I think this is an issue which ought to be undertaken. The Wiesenthal Institute has published the idea, full-page ads in the *New York Times*, that assassination ought to be classified as a crime against humanity. That, too, is an idea, in my opinion, which ought to be pursued. But the lessons learned and the pain and suffering which comes from the assassination of a great leader such as Ms. Bhutto ought to be studied. We ought to look to the future to be sure that where there are recurrences—and regrettably, it is highly likely there will be recurrences—that we profit by that experience.

In addition to traveling to Pakistan, Congressman KENNEDY and I visited in Israel and in Syria. We talked to Prime Minister Olmert in Israel. We talked to President Bashar al-Asad in Syria. Both are national leaders and both expressed a desire to have a peace treaty. It is very difficult to assess the possibilities by talking, even with the probing questions, because it depends so much on a matter of trust. But I think it is worth noting that back-channel negotiations have been undertaken. A report has appeared in the Arabic press and specified in my written statement but has not appeared, to my knowledge, in the American press. We do know Israel and Syria came very close to an agreement in 1995, until Prime Minister Rabin was assassinated, and then again brokered by President Clinton near the end of his term in 2000. They came very close to an agreement, when it was reported that Syrian President Hafez al-Asad was more con-

cerned with the succession of his son than in completing the treaty. Only Israel can decide whether it is in Israel's interest to give up the Golan, which is the central issue.

But warfare is very different now than it was in 1967, when Israel took the Golan Heights. The rockets are impervious to elevated spots such as the Golan, and it is a very different strategic concern. But as Prime Minister Olmert commented—and I quoted him in the written statement—there are very material advantages which could come if Syria would stop supporting Hamas. It would promote the possibilities of a treaty between Palestinian President Abbas and Israel. If Syria would stop supporting Hezbollah and destabilizing Lebanon, there could be a great advantage. Such a treaty would have the potential of driving a wedge between Syria and Iran which would be of value.

That is a very brief statement of the extensive written report which I have filed, and I appreciate it being printed in the *RECORD*, at the conclusion of my statement. I thank the managers of the pending bill for yielding this time, and I conclude my statement by yielding the floor.

EXHIBIT 1

STATEMENT OF SENATOR ARLEN SPECTER REPORT ON FOREIGN TRAVEL TO THE UNITED KINGDOM, ISRAEL, PAKISTAN, JORDAN, SYRIA, AUSTRIA AND BELGIUM

Mr. President, as is my custom from returning abroad, I have sought recognition to report on the recent trip I made overseas from December 22, 2007 to January 4, 2008.

UNITED KINGDOM

On the morning of December 23, the delegation which included my wife Joan, Representative Patrick Kennedy, Christopher Bradish, a member of my staff, Colonel Gregg Olson, our escort officer and Captain Ron Smith, our doctor and me, departed from Washington Dulles International Airport for London, England. After a flight of just over 7 hours, we arrived at London Heathrow Airport. The following morning we departed for Tel Aviv, Israel.

ISRAEL

We arrived in Tel Aviv on the evening of December 24. We were greeted at the airport by Rachel Smith our control officer from the embassy.

The following morning, I was briefed by DCM Luis Moreno and Political Counsel Marc Sievers on the latest developments in the region. The country team stressed that, prior to the Annapolis conference, tension in the region was high. The team informed us that Prime Minister Olmert and President Mahmoud Abbas have good chemistry and that the leaders remain optimistic that an agreement can be reached in 2008. We discussed some of the prevalent matters in the region including the situation in the Gaza strip, the dynamic between Fatah and Hamas, the Paris conference, the security situation in Israel and the political outlook for the region. Following the briefing, we departed for a meeting with Israeli President Shimon Peres.

Having traveled to Israel 25 times during my tenure, I had come to know many of Israel's leaders including President Shimon Peres. I asked the President for his thoughts on how to break the cycle of violence and hate that reigns in the region. He provided

his candid assessment of the prospects for peace but stressed that nothing can be solved without cooperation, a strong commitment to economic improvement which entails the creation of jobs in addition to aid money and the tangible benefits of changing the economic situation and the impact that has on changing people's lives. President Peres stated it was critical to support Abu Mazen and develop the West Bank.

I asked Peres on the prospects for future dealings with Syria. The President said Syria should make a choice: Lebanon or the Golan. If they meddle in Lebanon, the Israeli's will not discuss Golan and that all other issues are secondary.

I pressed President Peres on Iran and what he thought should be done. He stated that the U.S. needs a united, coherent policy to combat President Ahmadinejad's policy of enriching uranium. He complimented President Bush in showing courage, but that the capacity to build a coalition was absent. Peres did not express great alarm about Iran as he believes that the world will not allow the Islamic Republic to acquire nuclear weapons. I asked if there were any lessons from our diplomatic engagement with North Korea to which he responded by highlighting the benefits of diplomatic and economic efforts.

I mentioned to Peres that we would be traveling to Pakistan and solicited his thoughts. He believes that religious fanatics in the region are a massive problem for the government and that the U.S. should not force Pakistan and its leaders to be an American democracy—a theme that would continue in our meetings in Pakistan. He did not believe that the situation between Pakistan and India would lead to war but that it is imperative that Pakistan secure its nuclear arsenal—something with which I strongly agree.

President Peres suggested that oil is our great enemy: It finances terror, makes a mockery of democracy, negatively impacts the environment, and undercuts ideological foundations. He called for increased efforts to pursue alternatives to fossil fuels.

When asked about his view on our engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan, Peres stated that we have no choice but to combat radical extremism and those who think modernity will end. He elevated the struggle to one of those in the modern world versus those who are not able to deal with the fact that science has replaced them. He pointed to the fact that you cannot find an Israeli hospital without an Arab doctor. And even an Israeli who will not hire an Arab has no problem with one operating on him with a knife.

When discussing our bilateral relationship, Peres said: "The less we need America, the more friendly our relations will become." President Peres ended the meeting by extending an invitation for us to come back to Israel for the sixtieth anniversary of Israel. We left the President's office for our next meeting at the Knesset with former Prime Minister and Likud party leader, Benjamin Netanyahu.

The focus of our discussion with Netanyahu and Zarman Shoval centered on Iran. He expressed his support for continued economic pressure in the form of sanctions and pension fund divestment. He reported that U.S. states divesting from companies, mostly European, doing business with Iran is having an impact. Netanyahu concluded that Iran's building of long range weapon platforms and its increased centrifuge activities leaves it with very little left to do to obtain a nuclear weapon. A theme in my discussions with Israeli officials, in Washington, DC and Israel, is that our Nations don't differ on the facts but we do differ on the interpretation. He was not convinced that Iran halted its

program and more importantly that we do not know if Iran restarted its efforts.

In addition to talking about unilateral actions, Netanyahu recommended that we work with the Europeans and form a unified front with Russia. He stressed the importance of "turning back the momentum" domestically and internationally to combat Iran.

I asked Netanyahu what can be done to break the cycle of violence and hatred. He said this is a battle between modernity/globalization and militant Islam and that this "culture of death" with nuclear weapons could lead to catastrophe. Militant Islam, according to Netanyahu, works by brainwashing individuals. The information and economic revolution could be the best weapon against this ideology as a form of combating brainwashing. Following our meeting with Netanyahu, we departed for a meeting with Former Prime Minister and current Defense Minister, Ehud Barak.

I had met with Barak when he was in Washington, DC attending the Annapolis conference. He provided me an update on Israeli security service actions and intelligence gained since we last spoke. I asked the Defense Minister to provide his views on breaking the cycle of violence and hatred and his outlook for the region. Barak believes that we cannot reshape but can guide and offer a path of more opportunity. He expressed his support for strengthening moderates like Abu Mazen and Salaam Fayyad and that he is more optimistic dealing with these leaders than he was when serving as Prime Minister dealing with Yasser Arafat. I asked him about coming close to an agreement in 2000 with Chairman Arafat. Barak said the gap may have been narrow, but it was very deep.

When asked about Lebanon and Syria, Barak said Syria continues to destabilize Lebanon. He pointed to the recent assassination of Francois El-Hajj, who was expected to be Lebanon's new Army commander in chief should General Michel Suleiman take over as President. Barak believes that Syria would not stand to see the deputy elevated and that Syria wants a government that will request the U.N. to halt its investigation in the Hariri assassination—an attack that some suspect was orchestrated by Syria. When I asked Barak about his peace efforts while serving as Prime Minister with Syria, he indicated that there was an opportunity, but Hafez Assad was more concerned about his son's succession than peace.

On Iran, Minister Barak reiterated that the information between U.S. and Israeli intelligence is 95 percent the same, but that different interpretations persist. Barak expressed concern over Iran's hidden program and that they are not likely to cooperate. I asked about getting Russia to assist and President Putin's offer to handle part of Iran's fuel cycle. Barak stated that Russia wants to see the U.S. squeezed right now but that we must engage China and Russia if we want to have success on this front. We departed the Knesset for our next meeting with President Mahmoud Abbas and Salaam Fayyad in the West Bank.

On Christmas Eve, we loaded in our convoy bound for Bethlehem in the Palestinian-controlled West Bank. Security was tight as we left Jerusalem and entered the West Bank with security personnel lining both sides of the street every 100 yards. Upon arrival we were greeted by Salaam Fayyad, the well-respected, western-educated finance minister, with whom I've had a relationship for some years. I asked Abu Mazen about the status of talks and prospects for peace. He shared his optimism and informed me that he would be meeting with Prime Minister Olmert in two days. He described 2008 as precious and that

he will work with the Israelis to reach a deal. He expressed his concern over Israeli settlement activities and the negative impact this could have on the process.

President Abbas informed the delegation that Hamas' popularity was subsiding but that they are still receiving assistance through tunnels and border crossings. Should these not be blocked, money and weaponry still can flow to Gaza. While this type of activity harms the process, he indicated that humanitarian aid must flow to Palestinians residing in the West Bank.

The delegation pressed Abu Mazen about anti-Israeli Palestinian decrees and expressed that these are not acceptable. The President responded emphatically by saying, "I am the head of the PLO, I am the head of Fatah and I am recognizing Israel and we want peace."

Congressman Kennedy asked President Abbas about comparisons to the successful peace talks in Ireland and the prospects for transferring some of the mechanisms employed to the Middle East. Abu Mazen said there are elements that can be utilized especially in the arena of people to people programs.

Salaam Fayyad shared his gratitude for the pledges made in Paris and informed us that debt is being paid and the economy showing signs of improvement. He cited that hotel occupancy rate is near 100 percent which is up from 5-10 percent earlier this year. He expressed his desire for implementing larger infrastructure projects and a reduction in Israeli restrictions, such as check points, which hinder businesses. We concluded our meeting and returned to Jerusalem.

On December 25, we had a morning meeting with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. The Prime Minister requested I brief him on developments in the United States and our views towards the region. Olmert asked about the U.S. role in moving forward with Syria and if anything can be done given their meddling in Lebanon. I told him I thought there is a chance based on the progress made in 1995 and 2000. I told him of my discussions in Washington, DC with Syrian officials and that they expressed their interest in talks. I told him I thought that the status of the Golan Heights would be the crux of the negotiations.

Olmert told me he is prepared to negotiate with Syria but that it is a long process that needs to mature and that Syria must deliver, not just talk. I pressed Olmert about what actions he had taken and who would make the first move. I reminded Olmert that Henry Kissinger said it took 34 negotiating sessions with Hafez Al-Assad to get an agreement.

Prime Minister Olmert said the National Intelligence Estimate on Iran was not helpful in efforts to combat Iran's suspected nuclear weapons program. When asked if he thought they stopped in 2003, Olmert replied, "I don't know." He expressed his hope that U.S. intelligence based its findings on solid facts.

Olmert, like Netanyahu, stated that if they have enough uranium they can do everything else needed to make a weapon in short order. Nevertheless, Olmert stated that we must carry on impressing upon Iran to change their course.

I requested specifics on how to confine Iran's nuclear weapons program to which Olmert cited the usefulness of economic pressure such as sanctions. He expressed displeasure that the debate has been confined to two options: Military action or acquiescence. The Prime Minister said he will raise alternatives with President Bush during his January 2008 visit.

Representative Kennedy asked Olmert about the Gaza-Hamas-Egypt nexus and the

problems associated with smuggling. Olmert confirmed that the movement of money, weapons, to include anti-tank and anti-air missiles, and terrorists across the Philadelphia line is a major concern. He indicated displeasure with Egyptian acquiescence on this front and said that he had raised his concerns with President Mubarak and that he would be dispatching Defense Minister Barak to Egypt the following day to follow up on these issues.

I asked the Prime Minister about the reported "offer" from Hamas for a ceasefire. Olmert said that no offer was made, but rather a journalist reported receiving a call from Hamas indicating an interest and that the media subsequently played it up. He questions the logic of negotiating with Hamas as all it would do is provide Hamas an opportunity to re-arm and Israel would get nothing. He made clear his stance that he is not inclined to negotiate with a group who wants to kill Israelis and refuses to recognize the state.

On the Israeli-Palestinian track, Olmert stated that Abbas and Fayyad recognize Israel and want to make peace and are serious, committed partners. When we discussed breaking the cycle of violence and hate in the region, Olmert pointed to Abbas as an example as someone who changed, became a legitimate political leader and sees things differently than he did 30 years ago. However, the question if the two sides can agree on outstanding issues is unknown. He believes reaching an agreement in 2008 is possible but that implementation would take more time.

I pressed the Prime Minister about the settlements controversy raised in the media and directly by the Palestinians. He explained that he has established a complete moratorium on new settlements, but that Israel can build on plans previously approved at current sites. We departed the Prime Minister's office for our next meeting with Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni.

I called on Tzipi Livni to get her perspective on the Israeli-Palestinian track, Syrian-Israeli track and broader regional matters. Livni believes Abu Mazen and Salaam Fayyad are sincere in their goals for peace and in refraining from using terrorism. She supports the approach of strengthening pragmatic Palestinians like Abbas and Fayyad. She went so far as to say that Salaam Fayyad is a determined person in this process and has exhibited real courage.

I asked the Foreign Minister about economic development for the Palestinians and the strategy to elevate their situation. She said development was important but that we should not look to it as the sole source to bring about change. Minister Livni stated that Israel cannot afford another terrorist state, a real partner in peace must be found and the only way to achieve a Palestinian state is through negotiations, not terror. She appreciated the rights of Palestinians and the impacts of security measures, but stated that Israelis have a right not to live in fear and endure terror.

That afternoon, the delegation met with Saeb Erekat, the Palestinian's chief negotiator. I had met with Saeb in the past and found him to be an intelligent and insightful player on understanding the conflict.

Saeb informed me that the Israelis and Palestinians have "matured" and that there is a genuine need for the peace process. He expressed his view that the sides are in agreement on 70 percent of what a pact would entail but that no outside country can finalize a deal—it must be done by the Israelis and Palestinians—it must be done by Olmert and Abbas.

Saeb and I talked about the broader Middle East and regional conflicts. He believes that

democracy in the Middle East will defeat Al Qaeda and if negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians fail, Osama bin Laden wins. He expressed his optimism that a deal can be reached in 2008 and that both sides are prepared for peace. He stated that there needs to be a package deal and both sides know exactly what the other wants—Israel wants no refugees and security and the Palestinians want Jerusalem and land.

On the issue of Iran, Saeb said that Iranian nationalism cannot be overlooked when approaching Tehran. He expressed frustration over anti-Israeli comments made by President Ahmadinejad: "When he says he wants Israel off the map, he is killing me!" He cannot comprehend why Iran would support Hamas in Gaza and pointed out that Abu Mazen has been invited to Tehran nine times and never responded. He suggested that Iran wants a deal and is willing to make one with the U.S. or international community.

Saeb closed by indicating that progress on the Syrian-Israeli track would be beneficial to the Palestinian-Israeli track. The following morning we drove from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv en route to Pakistan.

PAKISTAN

We landed in Islamabad, Pakistan on the night of Wednesday, December 26 and were met by our control officer Jason Jeffreys.

The following morning, we met with Hamid Karzai, President of Afghanistan, in his hotel room. President Karzai was in Islamabad for officials meetings. President Karzai stated that U.S. efforts in Afghanistan are working, roads are being built, economies are being turned around and schools are improving.

I pressed President Karzai on the prospects for victory over the Taliban and Al Qaeda. He stated that he and President Musharraf had focused on this issue in their meeting earlier and that it was a priority. Karzai stated that the Taliban is not a long term threat in Afghanistan as they have no popular support. The President stated that more must be done to address the sanctuaries, training grounds and madrassas.

I asked Karzai about the prospects of catching Osama bin Laden. The President told me that he will not be able to hide forever and that sooner or later he will be caught.

I asked President Karzai about Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons. He stated that nuclear weapons in the region bring pride and a sense of security. He stated that Iran and the U.S. should open a dialogue, talking pays and that no one can benefit from confrontation.

Following our meeting with President Karzai, we departed for the embassy for the country team briefing led by Ambassador Patterson.

The delegation, including Ambassador Patterson, departed the embassy to our next meeting with General Tariq Majid, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. General Majid's headquarters are located in Rawalpindi—the same part of Islamabad where Benazir Bhutto would be killed later that same day.

I pressed Gen. Majid on Pakistan's efforts to combat Al-Qaeda and locate Osama bin Laden. He indicated that he does not know where he is but that Pakistan should be able to find him but that it must be an integrated and combined effort with U.S. support.

I expressed my concern over the problems in the FATA region and asked what is being done to combat the issues plaguing that region and the country. He responded by telling me that for many years, Pakistan did not have access to the tribal belt but that military forces were now engaged—100,000 according to Majid.

I told the General of my concern over Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and the command

and control structures in place to ensure the weapons do not fall into the hands of militants. He informed me that there is a structure in place that ensures that there can be no rogue launch of nuclear weapons as the President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Defense Minister and the service chiefs all have to approve usage.

I expressed my desire to see the Indian subcontinent denuclearized—a matter I had taken up with the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan over a decade earlier. Majid informed me that Pakistan had made such an offer to India but that it was rejected. Pakistan claims its arsenal is an insurance policy against the much larger Indian force and that they do not have regional ambitions. India not only looks at Pakistan but looks east towards China and would not likely give up their arsenal with such a neighbor. China would be unlikely to surrender its weapons given the considerable arsenals of Russia and the United States.

I expressed my concern over Iran's nuclear activities and ambitions. Majid indicated that Pakistan did not have a problem with a peaceful program but that they object to high levels of enrichment. Any military action against Iran, Majid said, would compound problems in Pakistan. He suggested bilateral talks between the U.S. and Iran as the path leading us out of this dilemma.

I told Gen. Majid of my great concern over the situation in Pakistan, the political crisis, the removal of members of the judiciary and the imprisonment of citizens. I told him there was great concern in the United States and talk of altering U.S. aid to Pakistan's military. Majid asked us to remember that Pakistan is not the U.S. and that their democracy and institutions are not as strong as ours. He asked us to review the actions taken by the Chief Justice as he claimed he was acting beyond his jurisdiction.

Following our meeting with Gen. Majid, we were received by President Pervez Musharraf at his palace. He expressed his satisfaction with bilateral relations but indicated that stopping the military cooperation would negatively impact the relationship. I pressed Musharraf on the reported misuse of aid and overcharging on reimbursements. The President objected to the characterization of his government's actions claiming that all requests are analyzed, mutually agreed upon and submitted.

I asked Musharraf about his efforts to combat terrorism. He generalized about his government's efforts to combat the Taliban and Al Qaeda. He indicated that actions in Afghanistan have led to an overflow of troublemakers in western Pakistan. When I asked if he will catch Osama bin Laden, he responded that he, "can't say for sure, but we should." He claimed he does not have the forces required to search and police some of the areas he may be hiding.

I informed the President that we want transparency in Pakistan and events such as removal of the Chief Justice cause grave concern. I told Musharraf responded by saying Pakistan has various pillars of government like the U.S. but that their institutions are not as strong and capable as those in the U.S. He indicated that the Chief Justice had acted inappropriately and that his activities included corruption, kickbacks and inappropriately using his influence, which would not be tolerated in the United States. Musharraf stated the Chief Justice was doing an injustice to Pakistan, interfering in various cases in other courts, actively campaigned in political rallies, traveling with his own masked security detail and interfering with the executive branch in privatization matters which had led to Pakistan's recent economic success.

When I pressed Musharraf on the rationale of imposing martial law, he stated that the

government was weakening, economy declining and terrorists rising and that it was needed to maintain stability. He stated that most people that were detained had been released. We departed the Presidential Palace for a working lunch at the Ambassador's residence to further evaluate and discuss the issues confronting Pakistan and our bilateral relationship. Attendees included Ambassador Patterson, General Helmly, Peter Bodde, Candace Putnam, Jason Jeffreys and the delegation.

On the afternoon of December 27, we received word in our control room that there had been an incident at a political rally for Benazir Bhutto. As we were preparing for a dinner hosted by President Musharraf we got word that she had possibly been injured and was taken to the hospital. As I headed to the elevators, Chris Bradish, my deputy, informed me that Benazir had died. I had known her for nearly 20 years. We were scheduled to meet with her in her home at 9 p.m. that night—in approximately 3 hours.

I received many calls and e-mails from the U.S. requesting information on the situation. Below is a transcript of a phone conversation I had with MSNBC:

HALL: On the phone with us now is Senator ARLEN SPECTER, who is in Islamabad and was, according to what I'm being told, expected to meet with Benazir Bhutto sometime tonight. Senator, are you there?

SPECTER: I am. Congressman PATRICK KENNEDY and I were scheduled to meet with Benazir Bhutto this evening. We were scheduled to go to a dinner with President Musharraf. We had met with President Musharraf earlier today and, en route to the dinner, about ready to go, we heard the tragic news.

HALL: And how did you learn the news, sir?

SPECTER: Watching CNN. We heard, first, that there had been a suicide bomber attempt, that Benazir Bhutto was OK. Then we heard she'd been hurt, critically, and then the news came in that it had been fatal.

HALL: And tell us a little bit about what you were planning to meet with her regarding. We know that Hamid Karzai met with her, as well as Pervez Musharraf, on the security issue concerning the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan. What was the focus of your meeting?

SPECTER: Well, Congressman Patrick Kennedy and I are in the region. We had been to Israel on our way to Syria. And we had meetings with President Musharraf today, and we also saw Afghanistan President Karzai, who just coincidentally was in town.

And we had a meeting with former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto this evening at nine o'clock Pakistan time, and it was scheduled then because she had a full day of campaigning.

And our concerns are about what is happening here, the stability; what's happening with the supreme court; what's happening with our fight against terrorism, our efforts to capture Osama Bin Laden; and what is happening to the very substantial funding the United States has put in here; what the prospects were for the election.

I've known Benazir Bhutto for the better part of two decades, having been visiting her in Karachi back in 1988 and when she was Prime Minister in 1995. And we were looking forward to talking to her to get to her evaluation on whether the elections would be honest and open, and to get her sense of the situation.

HALL: And what did you think her—the impact that she played while, of course, she was alive, with her opposition group, and now with her assassination? Obviously, you felt that she was important, a critical piece

of this puzzle, in that you were planning to meet with her at 9 p.m., at the time there.

SPECTER: Well, Benazir Bhutto was a very prominent person this year, the leader of a major party; had a real opportunity to become Prime Minister, a brilliant woman with a family background. Her father had been Prime Minister. She had been Prime Minister twice.

She had a lot of popular support, and she was the first woman Prime Minister of Pakistan and a very prominent woman internationally, sort of, the symbol of modernity, so that it's a tremendous loss, and we. . .

HALL: And what do you think is the. . .

SPECTER: . . . we can't let the terrorists win. We have to rebound and we have to be sure that democracy moves forward in Pakistan.

HALL: But Senator, we're looking at the images out of Pakistan, and I don't want to paint a picture bleaker than it is, but certainly, immediately following the assassination, people spilling out into the streets blaming, some of them, anyway, Pervez Musharraf—quite a picture of instability. What needs to happen, in your opinion, being there?

SPECTER: Well, it is easy to blame people, but it's premature. There has to be an investigation. There has to be determination, to the extent possible, as to what happened.

When you have an assassination, this sort of a violent act, you have to expect people to be erupting in the streets. But there will be a tomorrow. There will be elections here. We have to assert the democratic process and we have to move forward.

We cannot let the crazy suicide bombers take over the world. And that is our job for tomorrow.

HALL: And still very early into this breaking news, Senator—again, to update our audience, we are following developments in Pakistan in the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Senator Arlen Specter was expected to meet with her this evening.

Senator Specter, the impact—so many people are wondering, with Pakistan being so crucial to this war on terror, that there may perhaps be a vacuum in that country, now, with the assassination having taken place and this could offset all of the work, the \$10 billion that's been put into Pakistan and the support of Pervez Musharraf since 9/11.

SPECTER: Well, we are not going to allow this incident, tragic as it is, to upset the very important work at hand. You have the Pakistani government working with the United States government. They have been allies of ours.

We have not been pleased with some of the things that they have done, like having the chief justice under house arrest or having an emergency suspension, which has been eliminated.

But the elections are going forward and we are going to rebound from this event and do what is necessary to defeat the terrorists and to have the democratic elections. We are not going to give in.

And we will rebound, and stability will be restored after the outbursts which are present tonight. It may take some time, but we're going to win.

HALL: Senator, do you have confidence in Pervez Musharraf and the job that he's done and doing?

SPECTER: I do have confidence. When Congressman Patrick Kennedy and I met with him today, we raised a number of our concerns in a very candid discussion.

We are concerned that the substantial U.S. funding be directed toward the specific purposes of fighting terrorism. And we are checking to see if some of it might have been diverted. But by and large, we think the

monies are going in the right direction. We expressed concern about what is happening with the supreme court here. We expressed concern about the state of emergency, but that has been reversed.

The elections are going forward and he is our best hope there. It is not a perfect situation. Nothing is. But we have to utilize the government which is here to help stabilize it and to move forward.

HALL: All right, Senator Arlen Specter from Islamabad.

Thank you very much, Senator, for your time, just on the very day you were expected to meet with former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Thank you, Senator.

Just before midnight on the night of Bhutto's death, we ventured back out into the city to go to Bhutto's local headquarters to pay our respects. We met with her supporters, gave our condolences and laid flowers beneath a photo of her.

We were scheduled to travel to Lahore the following morning to meet with Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi and Mian Shahbaz Sharif and visit a USAID project. After the State Department consulted with the Pakistani government, it was recommended that our delegation cancel the planned trip to Lahore due to the deteriorating and uncertain security situation. The following morning we left Chakala Airfield for Amman, Jordan.

SYRIA

On Saturday, December 29 we departed Amman for Damascus, Syria. Upon arrival at Allama Iqbal International Airport, we were greeted by CDA Todd Holmstrom and officials from our embassy Pamela Mills and Katherine Van De Vate. This trip was my 17th visit to Syria.

We proceeded to a working lunch with Mr. Holmstrom where we discussed the situation in Syria, Lebanon, Israel and the greater region. Following our lunch we departed for a meeting with Foreign Minister Walid al-Mouallem.

I provided him with a copy of Haaretz which published the headline: "Olmert Says Ball is in Assad's Court."

[From Haaretz, Dec. 26, 2007]

OLMERT: BALL IS IN ASSAD'S COURT

(By Barak Ravid)

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert sent a message to Syrian President Bashar Assad yesterday saying he was still waiting for a Syrian response on the likelihood of renewing negotiations between the two countries.

Olmert met yesterday with U.S. Senator Arlen Specter (Republican-Pennsylvania), who will travel tomorrow for meetings with Assad's government. Specter is a big supporter of resuming dialogue with Damascus.

Much of yesterday's meeting addressed Syria. During the meeting, Specter asked Olmert whether he wanted to further the diplomatic process with Syria. Olmert said that for the past few months he has been appraising whether negotiations could be resumed through mediators.

"I am still evaluating the Syrian track and the degree to which Damascus is serious about [a peace process]," Olmert said. "I have not stopped the assessment, but so far I have not received a clear answer and I am still waiting."

Officials in Jerusalem added yesterday: "Even though Olmert did not ask specifically that his message be relayed to Assad, we assume that it will be raised during [Specter's] talks in Damascus."

Specter also met with Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and discussed Syria.

Livni did not reject the possibility of renewing negotiations with Syria, but said there was a series of issues troubling Israel.

"The Syrians need to show that they are willing to contribute something toward gaining the release of the abducted soldiers in

the Gaza Strip and in Lebanon, or express willingness to end the smuggling of weapons to Hezbollah, so that we will know that they are serious," Livni said.

This would "make it easier for us to consider negotiations with them," she added.

According to an annual assessment prepared by the Foreign Ministry's research office and presented to the Knesset Foreign Relations and Defense Committee, "Damascus is interested in a settlement with Israel, but only on its terms and with American involvement."

According to the report, Assad understands that the current American administration is unwilling to negotiate with him on his terms, so he is ready to wait until 2009, when a new president is in the White House.

Walid told me that during Speaker PELOSI's visit, she brought a message from Olmert and President Assad responded only to have Israel deny it made such an overture. We agreed that certain conversations must remain out of the press and remain private.

Mouallem outlined a plan he believes critical to pushing ahead with the Israeli-Syrian track including Israeli withdrawal from the Golan and return to the June 4, 1967 borders. Walid stated that, based on prior discussions dating back to 1995, 95 percent of a prospective deal had been agreed upon.

I said it was good that Syria sent representatives to Annapolis; and added that Olmert was waiting for a signal from Syria. I pressed him on Lebanon and told him it was my view that the International Community as well as the United States does not accept that Syria does not have a role in Lebanon and that this relationship has a negative impact on U.S.-Syrian as well as Israeli-Syrian relations.

Walid stated the need to create a climate for peace. Walid stated that French President Sarkozy asked President Assad to help elect a president in Lebanon. The Foreign Minister highlighted the importance of having a consensus candidate and the difficulty of ruling by majority in Lebanon. He stated that Syria agreed to work with the French provided that the goal be a consensus unity government, not majority rule, the U.S. remain neutral and France would not back any party. The Foreign Minister provided me with a document which was presented to the Lebanese on the path forward. He stated that Syria's work was done and that it was in Lebanon's hands to chart the course forward.

I asked him about the prospects of a prompt resolution of the stalemate. Walid told me that the Syrians and French had been working for 45 days trying to find common ground. In the end, according to Walid, the outcome depends on what the majority will give the minority in terms of minister posts.

When I pressed him on Syria's actions to destabilize its neighbor, the Foreign Minister responded, "We are not destabilizing Lebanon, we are directly impacted. We have 250,000 Lebanese as the result of last summer's conflict with Israel, we have 500,000 Palestinian refugees and we have 1.6 million Iraqi refugees."

The Foreign Minister emphasized he did not approve of the U.S. holding the Israeli-Syrian track or improved U.S.-Syrian relations hostage to the issue of Lebanon. He specifically asked that the U.S. not deal with Syria only through the lens of Lebanon, Hamas and Hezbollah.

The Foreign Minister rejected my complaints that Syria was supporting Hamas and Hezbollah. He said that weapons to Hamas go through Egypt and that only 20 members of Hamas were in Syria. He said that resumption of Syrian cooperation on intelligence with the U.S. would depend on better U.S.-Syrian relations.

Following our meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we attended a dinner hosted by the embassy. Civil society leaders were in attendance and shared their wide array of views on the region and U.S. Syrian relations.

The next morning we met with President Bashar al-Assad. He reiterated what the Foreign Minister told us of the steps needed to bring Israel and Syria closer to the table. He stated that there must be U.S. involvement. I told him it would be beneficial to use the momentum and attention of Annapolis to show the region, the U.S. and the world that Syria was interested in peace. Assad said he was more optimistic about the potential for success on a Syrian-Israeli agreement after Annapolis than before.

I told Assad that it would be beneficial to take positive action to show that he is serious about peace and that Syria is not meddling in Lebanon. I also told him that Syria would benefit by cooperating with the U.S. on intelligence sharing. Assad told me that there must be political cooperation first—sending an Ambassador to Syria and refraining from negative rhetoric would be a good first step.

I pressed Assad on the case of missing Israeli soldiers. He indicated that he had spoken to Hezbollah and asked them to release the Israelis but that Hezbollah was waiting for a response from Israel on a prisoner swap proposal. He said he believed Hezbollah was ready to make a deal and Syria was willing to take messages between the two. He stated that Egypt was working on the release of the soldier held by Hamas in Gaza. On the case of Ron Arad, Assad stated that he had no information on what happened to him.

When I asked Assad about the request for a new U.S. mission, he stated that Syria needed a year to facilitate the development of the requisite infrastructure. Assad said that he was disappointed with the slow progress but that that bureaucracy had been the cause of the delay.

Following our meeting with President Assad, we met with Syrian opposition leader Riad Seif. Seif shared with us his ongoing bout with prostate cancer and the difficulty he has had with the Syrian government limiting his ability to seek treatment. Seif said he needs to travel outside of Syria to receive the most advanced care which is currently not available in Damascus. We discussed his activities and those of the National Council which includes over 160 members and was formed on December 1. We discussed the plight of those who have been imprisoned and the repressive acts of the Syrian government.

The news conference which Representative Kennedy and I had at the Damascus airport summarizes our meetings in Syria:

SENATOR ARLEN SPECTER AND REPRESENTATIVE PATRICK KENNEDY REMARKS TO PRESS AT DAMASCUS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT PRIOR TO DEPARTURE DECEMBER 29, 2007

SENATOR SPECTER: Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, Congressman Kennedy and I had a very productive, lengthy meeting this morning with President Bashar al-Assad, and it is my custom not to quote directly; obviously President Assad speaks for himself. We had a meeting in the past several days in Jerusalem with Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, and again I choose not to quote directly, but to give you impressions as to where I think the situation stands with respect to the potential for a Syrian-Israeli peace treaty.

It is my sense that the time is right now, and the prospects are very good that the Syrians and the Israelis are in a position to proceed to have a peace treaty. I say that because of a number of factors. One is the An-

napolis meetings were a significant step forward. President Bashar al-Assad had the courage to go there representing Syria, meeting with the Israelis, meeting with the Palestinians, a meeting attended by President Bush, a meeting with the invitations coming from the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. A very important factor is present when President Bush has signified his willingness to participate and interest in becoming involved in the Mideast peace process, and that is a significant change as to what has been for the first seven years of his Administration.

To give you just a little insight into U.S. political activities, with the Congress in the hands of the Democrats; I'm a Republican; Congressman Kennedy is a Democrat. But in the United States, as you may know, Congress is separate. We have separation of powers, and we speak independently; even though the President is of my party, it is the tradition of Senators to be independent. But what has happened is that the President's domestic agenda has not been successful because of the division of power. He had ideas for social security reform, tax reform, immigration reform, and that is not productive now. So he is in a position to turn his attention to international affairs.

There is the potential for a victory for the President. It would also be a victory for Syria if Syria could regain the Golan Heights. It would be a victory for Israel if there could be a peace treaty. Right now, Syria and Israel continue to be in a state of war. Now the President is not going to spend his time unless there is a realistic possibility that something can be worked out, that it can be fruitful. But he is available, I think, to help on the Palestinian-Israeli track, and the Syrian-Israeli track can go forward at the same time.

It is not to say that there are not problems. Lebanon continues to be a major problem which we all know about. Whether it is right or whether it is wrong, there is the international perception that Syria has great influence, if not control, in Lebanon. Again, I say I make no judgment on the point. I am citing what I think to be the international perception. And it would be very important if the efforts of Syria and France working together can find an answer to the Lebanese issue. Congressman Kennedy and I discussed this, at some length, last night in a very long meeting, an hour and a half, with Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem and again to some extent with President Bashar al-Assad today. There are problems with Hamas and Hizbollah, and again there is the perception that Syria could be helpful in those, in those matters. So it is overall a very complicated picture. I've been coming to this region, as you may know, for a long time. I made my first trip here in 1984, been here some 16 times. [I] met nine times with President Hafez al-Assad, and now seven times with President Bashar al-Assad. It is different this year. It is different this year from what it was last year. It is my hope that the parties will seize the moment.

Let me yield now to my distinguished colleague.

CONGRESSMAN KENNEDY: I want to say it is an honor to be here. We had a very good meeting with the President, and I was very pleased that the President, when we brought up the issue of Syria's moving towards a more representative democracy because of the fact that the President was very clear that the kind of American democracy that we have, a Jeffersonian democracy, does not necessarily work here in the Middle East. He pointed to the fact that Iraq and Lebanon are perfect examples.

I did say, "Well then, what does work, where people can have a voice in their government?" He suggested that a coalition government, where various people, based upon the representation of their tribal group or ethnic group, can speak through their coalition, could have a representative government. And I said, "Well, to that degree then, is Syria moving towards that regard?" He said: "Well, that will take time." And I said, "Well, is it then your policy to jail people who are outspoken politically to your regime? Particularly the Foreign Minister said it was not the policy of Syria to jail political opponents, only to jail people who were related to foreigners in opposing Syria. And so I asked about the National Council, the Damascus Declaration, because recently they were all detained and put in jail, and they are not related to any foreigners. So I asked "Why were they put in jail? And have they been, would they be released?" and the President said that they would be released if they have not already. I gave him the names, I read the names, and he said they all are released. Could you read the names?

Akram al-Bunni, Walid al-Bunni, Ali Abdullah, Fidaa Khourani, Mohammed Yasser al-Eitti, Jaber al-Shufi, Ahmed Toumeih.

The President said they were released. The President assured me personally that they were released. He assured me personally that they had already been released. Yes. And I had the chance also to meet with Riad Seif, and I want to say that when I go back to the United States, I am going to nominate Mr. Seif for the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award, named after my uncle Robert Kennedy. That award is given to a person who has put their life in jeopardy on behalf of human rights. As all of you know, Mr. Seif's life, he was in jail for standing up for human rights; his son was incarcerated and has never reappeared. He is fighting on behalf of the 19,000 people who have disappeared and never reappeared again. I just don't know anything more frightening than being taken away in the middle of the night and not knowing whether you are ever going to return to your family again.

And for all of you to know, I say this to my own government when they are wrong as well. I say it all over the world wherever there are problems, and certainly when there are problems at home I write letters about my own government's mistreatment of human rights. So it is universal wherever it is. I would hope that someone over here would speak up on my behalf if they were over in my country, just as I would hope that I could speak up on someone else's behalf if I were over in their country, because it doesn't matter what country we are in; we are all human beings. We are not Syrians; we are not Americans; we are human beings first, and we ought to be treated as human beings.

QUESTION: Khalid Ouweiss from Reuters: Senator Specter, what is the next step to resume peace negotiations between Israel and Syria? What needs to be done? Have you heard of any compromises on both sides? Can you tell us in forthright and certain terms what needs to be done and when and when do you expect it to be done?

SENATOR SPECTER: The next step will be the arrival of President Bush in the Middle East in the course of the next week to ten days. And the focus will be on the Palestinian-Israeli track. But I think there will also be an opportunity to get a sense for what is happening in the region more broadly, including the Syrian-Israeli track. The parties are going to have to initiate, or continue talks through intermediaries. It is my hope, really expectation, that at some point when some preliminary progress has been made that the United States government

will be a party to broker conversations. But, this is going to have to evolve step by step from what has happened at Annapolis and what the sense is in Jerusalem today and what my sense is in Damascus today.

Later today I will be in touch with officials in the White House in Washington and also with officials of the Israeli government in Jerusalem to tell them the conversation with President Bashar al-Assad and my sense as to what ought to be done next.

QUESTION: Ziad Haider for Los Angeles Times. Senator, could you please elaborate on your role? Do you have a specific role between the Syrians and the Israelis? Are you an official mediator between the two sides?

SENATOR SPECTER: What is my role? The foreign policy of the United States Government under our Constitution is carried out by the Executive [Branch]. The Congress has very substantial authority on the appropriations process, on control of the military, on the authority to declare war, so Congress has very extensive responsibilities. Do I have an official role in the government?

QUESTION: Do you have a personal role? A specific personal role as a mediator?

SENATOR SPECTER: Well, I have described for you what my undertakings have been. They have been to talk to Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and other Israeli officials—Netanyahu, Barak, and Perez—and to talk to President Bashar al-Assad and also to Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem. And to convey to President Bashar al-Assad what conversations I had with Prime Minister Olmert and the others and I will now convey the conversations back to the Israeli officials.

QUESTION: Senator Specter and Congressman Kennedy, what was the content of your conversations with President Assad and Foreign Minister regarding the American steps with regard to Lebanon, what steps they are going to take in that regard? Are there any deals which have been talked about? Can you confirm that?

SENATOR SPECTER: Congressman Kennedy and I talked at length with Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem and again today to some extent with President Bashar al-Assad. We are looking for an answer there. Congressman Kennedy referenced the fact that we understand that it is not possible to have the same kind of democracy in Lebanon like we have in the United States, that what they are looking for is a consensus democracy, that you can't have the majority govern the country effectively, but with all the various factions, there has to be a consensus. Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem gave to Congressman Kennedy and me a document which the Syrians and the French have agreed to as the basis for adjusting the situation and going forward with elections in Lebanon. With respect to Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, we talked about Lebanon to some extent, but Israel does not factor into being a determinative factor there. Prime Minister Olmert is concerned about Hizbollah, concerned about potential Syrian support for Hamas, but the answers in Lebanon are going to have to come through the efforts of the Lebanese themselves with the assistance of Syria and France.

QUESTION: Lina Sinjab, BBC World News: Senator Specter, you mentioned, you talked about the importance of getting Syria and Israel back to the peace track and Syria's attendance in Annapolis was provided to have a Moscow version of Annapolis to talk about the Syrian-Israeli peace track. Are the Israelis committed to that? Is Olmert's government committed to attend the Moscow version of Annapolis and what is going to happen next?

SENATOR SPECTER: The question is, is Olmert committed to the peace track and what will happen next?

QUESTION: The question is there was a Moscow version of Annapolis to discuss Syria-Israel peace track and to talk about the Golan Heights, and is the Israeli government committed to that?

SENATOR SPECTER: Well, the question as to whether the Israeli government is committed is something only the Israeli government can answer and it will require the evolving discussions. I believe the inference is clear that Israel understands that if there is to be a treaty, that the Golan will have to be returned to Syria. I believe that that is the overhang. Has Prime Minister Olmert told me flatly that he is prepared to give the Golan Heights back? No. We did not get into that detail, but the whole process would not make any sense unless Syria gets back the Golan. Now there is going to have to be a working out of the fine lines. There is a question about the June 4, 1967, boundary. There are questions about security when the Golan goes back. There are questions about confidence-building measures. But I think it is accurate and conclusive to say that Prime Minister Olmert wants to have a peace treaty with Syria. Prime Minister Olmert is prepared to do what is necessary, in a reciprocal arrangement, to get it done.

QUESTION: Asaaf Aboud, BBC in Arabic. Senator Specter, you mentioned in your briefing that this visit is different from previous visits. In what aspect is it different? Have you reached a specific breakthrough in terms of the Syrian-Israeli peace track, for example?

SENATOR SPECTER: Well, it is different in many ways. When I was here in 1995 and 1996, Netanyahu was Prime Minister, there had been some conversations about Prime Minister Netanyahu holding Syria responsible for what was going on with Hizbollah. I carried a message to President Hafez al-Assad and it was, there were disagreements. A year ago, Israeli Prime Minister Olmert said he was interested in talks, but did not have the intensity of interest that he has now. Annapolis is a big change. President Bashar al-Assad had the courage to go in a difficult situation and made progress. Now, most of all, as I explained at some length, President Bush is willing to participate. To have the President of the United States involved is a big plus if the parties will take advantage of it. It is a very different atmosphere today, in Damascus, in Jerusalem and in Washington. Big difference.

Let me see how many more questions are there? I don't want to cut anyone short, but I'll know long my answers will be. One, two, three questions.

QUESTION (Elaph): This is a question for Representative Kennedy. You mentioned that regarding the Damascus Declaration detainees, that you expressed concern over their human rights, et cetera. And you did mention in your statement also that you are willing to accept somebody from Syria to criticize the violation of human rights in the United States. The lady is from Elaph News Agency, or website; she is saying that the Syrian opposition have, they interpret, they are critical of foreign intervention in local politics here, even on the human rights level. They would understand that if an American writer or a journalist would be critical of the human rights situation here, but they view with caution the intervention of foreign officials in the local political scene, the same way as a Syrian official would not interfere in the local political scene in the U.S. What would be your comment to that?

CONGRESSMAN KENNEDY: That makes no sense. The greatest human rights people in the world have their voice because they transcend political boundaries of any nation state. They are human beings. They speak to the human consciousness that is universal.

We are not Syrians, [or] Americans; there's the great Niemuller quote after Auschwitz: "First they came for the Catholics, and I wasn't a Catholic, so I did not speak up. Then they came for the laborers, and I wasn't a laborer, so I did not speak up. Then they came for the Jews, and I was not a Jew, so I did not speak up. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak up."

QUESTION: You talk about the return of dialogue between Damascus and Washington. But we know that such a dialogue should be conducted through diplomatic channels, at least this is the level which is a reasonable level. But as we know, there is no American ambassador to Damascus. So have you been talking about the possibility of returning an American ambassador to Damascus?

SENATOR SPECTER: The issue about a U.S. ambassador to Damascus, I think, in the eyes of President Bush turns on Lebanon today. The Ambassador was withdrawn when the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri [Hariri]. I think that is a decision which only the President can make, and I believe that he is not yet ready to make it, but perhaps—it's his decision, I'll emphasize—when things improve, an ambassador will come back.

QUESTION: You talked about Netanyahu in the previous visits you did. But do you feel after this visit that the current Israeli government is willing to return the Golan Heights in return for a peace treaty with Syria?

SENATOR SPECTER: Well, I repeat that I do not speak for the Israeli government. I started off by saying it is not my practice to quote President Bashar al-Assad or to quote Israeli Prime Minister Olmert or to quote anybody, but to tell you what my impressions are from the extended conversations which we have had. But we know that in 1995, when Prime Minister Rabin negotiated for Israel with President Hafez al-Assad, the deal was to return the Golan. We know that when Prime Minister Barak negotiated in the year 2000 with President Hafez al-Assad, the deal was to return the Golan. There was some disagreement as to precisely where the line would be on the June 4, 1967, line.

The core of any agreement, I think, is accepted that the Golan is going to have to come back. But only the parties can speak for themselves. Forty years later, it is a very strategic difference. You have rockets; you have very different issues of security than you had 40 years ago when the Golan was taken by Israel. I think it is fair and accurate to say, in a very complex context, that if there is no Golan return, there is no deal. That is the core of the deal. Then there has to be reciprocity. But nobody from the United States, including the President, can speak for Israel or for Syria. That's why it is important that the parties come forward at this time. I do not believe there will be a time this opportune, after Annapolis, and in the last year of a presidency where the President has so many domestic problems, that he has time and interest in coming to the Israel-Palestinian issue and the Syrian-Israeli issue.

Congressman Kennedy and I thank you for your attention. The presence of a free press is very, very important in our society, and Congressman Kennedy has spoken about our interest in human rights. He spoke very eloquently about that issue. Officials have a standing to talk about human rights, as well as journalists. You journalists have unique standing, but so do officials. But we admire what you are doing and your efforts in spreading the word as to what Congressman Kennedy and I have said today. We hope we'll be helpful in getting the word out that something very constructive can be done soon.

One final comment: Mrs. Assad and my wife Joan had a very pleasant meeting this

morning and spent some very quality time together.

Thank you very, very much.

We departed directly from the meeting for the airport en route to Vienna, Austria. During the flight, I had to opportunity to brief National Security Advisor Hadley on my visits to Pakistan, Syria and Israel. Because the connection was not good, I called Hadley from Vienna on a hard line for a more extensive discussion.

AUSTRIA

Upon arrival in Vienna, we were met by Michael Spring, our control officer and Christian Ludwig, a foreign service national. The following morning we traveled to the U.S. embassy for a country team briefing. Vienna is a unique location in that the U.S. has multi-missions: one to the Austrian government, the OSCE and the United Nations.

CDA Scott Kilner led the briefing which included representatives from the FBI, DHS and the United States Military. In all, the U.S. has 24 government agencies represented in Austria. We discussed the problem, one which is not only faced by the State Department, that there is not enough funding for certain government bodies.

We discussed Austria's role in the international community and more specifically their identity in Europe, their relationship with the EU, their bilateral relationship with the Czech Republic and their views on nuclear energy and missile defense. The group noted that Austria is currently campaigning for a seat on the UN Security Council. We discussed terrorism, the IAEA, Kosovo, energy security, Afghanistan and the changing demographics of Europe. We discussed the situation in Iran and our mission's efforts to process and assist Iranian refugees.

Following the country team briefing, I briefed Secretary of State Rice by telephone on some aspects of our discussions in Syria.

I met with Dr. Ferdinand Trautmannsdorf, the Director of International Legal Affairs and Thomas Mayr-Harting, the Political Director of the Austrian Foreign Ministry. The officials were very interested in my recent travels especially the situation in Pakistan. We had a substantial discussion about Iran, to include the impact of the NIE in Europe. I pressed them on Austria's significant stake in OMV, an Austrian industrial firm which has dealings with Iran. They responded by saying that the government does not have the ability to influence OMV—a statement with which I disagreed strongly.

On January 2, 2008, we met with Geoff Pyatt from our mission prior to our meetings at the United Nations. We discussed the IAEA and the issues surrounding Iran's nuclear program.

We departed the hotel for our meeting with Dr. Mohamed El-Baradei, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). I had spoken to Dr. Baradei about two months before by telephone when he extended an invitation to me to visit him in Vienna to discuss further the issues surrounding Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Dr. Baradei shared his view that the Middle East is in disarray and almost in civil war. I asked him about his views on Iran and his concept of seeking a "confession" from them on their nuclear agenda. He stated that the problems between the U.S. and Iran go back to 1953 with the CIA's intervention, the reign of the Shah and the embassy hostage situation and that these events have led to distrust and a lot of emotion on both sides. Iran's rationale for going underground with its nuclear program was that they could not do it above ground. The Director General stated that Iran does not want to rely on others to enrich uranium and that it is a

matter of national pride and is a lucrative trade.

When solicited about his views on President Putin's idea to have Russia handle Iran's nuclear material, he stated that Iran did not reject it but that they wanted their own capability. He suggested that an acceptable security structure must be negotiated with Iran to deter them. The DG agreed that it is not acceptable for Iran to have nuclear weapons and that his job was to verify that the program is clean and under IAEA inspections.

I pressed him on Iran's devious behavior in the past to conceal nuclear efforts and asked if we can ever be 100 percent sure. He stated that you can never be 100 positive but that he thinks Iran has things to tell him and that he has told them they should come clean.

The Director General suggested that direct U.S.-Iranian negotiations should begin immediately to resolve the impasse. The U.S. and international community need to understand what the nuclear issue means to Iran with respect to its position in the region and the world, that there needs to be an understanding of the repercussions and that it must be done in a manner that allows all sides to save face.

We discussed Secretary Rice's precondition that the U.S. would only meet with Iran if they halt enrichment. He said there must be middle ground to bring the parties together on this issue. He emphasized that sanctions alone won't resolve the situation and only makes people more hawkish. Iran's concealment of its R&D program, according to the Director, led to a confidence deficit in the international community.

I asked about the capabilities of an inspection regime given Iran's substantial size. He confirmed the need to have a robust verification system on the ground. Baradei stated that the Additional Protocol to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was helpful but that Iran stopped implementing it. The Additional Protocol was the result of an IAEA initiative to better constrain NPT member-states' ability to illicitly pursue nuclear weapons after secret nuclear weapons programs in Iraq and North Korea exposed weaknesses in existing agency safeguards. That effort eventually produced a voluntary Additional Protocol, designed to strengthen and expand existing IAEA safeguards for verifying that non-nuclear-weapon states-parties to the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) only use nuclear materials and facilities only for peaceful purposes. He stated that the Protocol gives him a good handle on Iran's nuclear program in that it provides access to additional facilities and information.

We discussed other issues confronting the Middle East such as the Palestinian question and Pakistan. I expressed my concern over the controls Pakistan has on its nuclear arsenal. Baradei agreed with my assessment and stated his first concern is those countries that already possess weapons. In the case of Pakistan, he stated his concern about those weapons falling under militant control.

Following our meeting with Dr. Baradei, we met with the United Nations office on Drugs and Crime. Dr. Thomas Pietschmann from the Research and Analysis Section and an expert on Afghanistan, Mr. Jean-Luc Lemahieu, an Afghanistan expert and Matthew Nice, a synthetic drug expert provided a detailed brief on the UN's efforts globally with a focus on Afghanistan. We discussed the patterns and trends in illicit drug production, trafficking and abuse. The group provided significant data on cultivation, eradication and supply and demand. Following the briefing we flew from Vienna to Brussels, Belgium.

BELGIUM

On January 3, we met with Victoria Nuland, the U.S. Ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). We discussed a wide range of topics to include NATO's involvement in Afghanistan, the NATO-Russian dynamic, NATO expanding global partnerships, the EU-NATO relationship, Kosovo and missile defense.

On January 4, we departed for our return to the United States.

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, January 2, 2008.

Hon. BAN KI-MOON,
Secretary-General of the United Nations,
New York, NY.

DEAR SECRETARY-GENERAL: In light of the uncertainty on who assassinated former Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and the impact of her assassination on the pending Pakistani elections, I urge the United Nations, either alone or in conjunction with the Musharraf government of Pakistan, to appoint an investigating commission.

Since President Musharraf has already suggested an international investigation, joint action by the U.N. would be consistent with Pakistani sovereignty. Even without the voluntary joinder of the Musharraf government, it is obvious that a U.N. investigation would have greater public credibility.

In making this recommendation, I recollect the action taken by President Lyndon Johnson within seven days after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy to appoint an independent investigating commission.

As you may know, Representative Patrick Kennedy, member of the U.S. House of Representatives (D-RI), and I were scheduled to meet with Ms. Bhutto at 9 p.m. on Thursday, December 27th. She had called for that late meeting because she was fully engaged in campaigning that day. As Representative KENNEDY and I were preparing to depart for a dinner with President Musharraf at 7 p.m. and the later meeting with Ms. Bhutto, we were informed of her assassination.

I am further concerned by a report in the Boston Globe from January 2, 2008 picking up a Washington Post story by Griff Witte and Emily Wax which says:

"Senator Latif Khosa, a lawmaker from Bhutta's Pakistan Peoples Party, said she had planned to give the lawmakers (referring to Representative KENNEDY and myself) a report outlining complaints an 'pre-poll rigging' by Musharraf's government and the military-run Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate."

In a matter of this sort it is to be expected, based on what happened following the assassination of President Kennedy, to have a wide range of allegations and conspiracy theories.

It would be expected that expert investigative bodies like the FBI and Scotland Yard and other national, reputable investigating organizations would be willing to undertake such an investigation under the name of the United Nations.

Sincerely,

ARLEN SPECTER.

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, January 22, 2008.

Hon. SARFRAZ KHAN LASHARI,
Election Monitor,
Pakistan People's Party

DEAR MR. LASHARI: It is my understanding that Ms. Bhutto may have intended to present me with a report detailing election fraud in Pakistan's upcoming election at the time of our scheduled meeting on December 27, 2007.

According to a January 1, 2008 article in The Guardian, you told reporters, "That's what she was going to explain to the U.S. Senators." "We have a lot of evidence that the government is involved in rigging. It was going to be discussed on that evening." I am very interested in examining any material that your party may have prepared for my review.

Americans are closely watching what is happening in Pakistan. Any help you can provide in shedding light on this tragic event may further the investigation into Ms. Bhutto's death, as well as help to ensure that the upcoming elections are free and fair.

I Thank you for your consideration of this request. I look forward to your response.

My best.

Sincerely,

ARLEN SPECTER.

U.S. SENATE,
Washington, DC.

MR. ASIF ALI ZARDARI: Please accept my sincere condolences on the loss of your wife.

Since my wife and I first visited your wife in Kurachi some twenty years ago, and in follow-up meetings when she was Prime Minister in Islamabad and thereafter in Washington, I have had great respect and admiration for her.

As you may know, Representative Patrick Kennedy and I were scheduled to meet with Ms. Bhutto at 9 p.m. on December 27, 2007, and were shocked by the assassination. I have noted in the press that the Honorable Sarfraz Khan Lashari was quoted in a January 1, 2008 article in the Guardian that Ms. Bhutto was going to turn over evidence of election-rigging to Representative Kennedy and me at our meeting.

With this letter, I am enclosing for you a copy of my letter to Mr. Lashari.

If you have any such evidence in your possession and would care to transmit it to me, I would be very pleased to receive it.

I am sure you will be interested to know that I wrote to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon on January 2, 2008 calling for an international investigation of the assassination. I have not yet had a response.

I am also writing today to the UN Secretary General urging that the United Nations set up a standing investigating commission which would be available to move quickly to investigate any future assassinations.

With this letter I am enclosing copies of both those letters for you.

Again, my condolences. Let me know if I can be of further assistance.

My best.

Sincerely,

ARLEN SPECTER.

AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY CENTER

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I wish to discuss the current situation with regard to siting of the American Revolution Center at Valley Forge, a museum dedicated to interpreting, honoring, and celebrating the complete story of the entire American Revolution, within Valley Forge National Historical Park in Pennsylvania.

I have been working with the American Revolution Center for a number of years, and there has been no shortage of challenges. The current challenge is related to zoning issues in Lower Providence Township, Montgomery County. The township has approved a zoning ordinance to enable development of the

American Revolution Center on a 78-acre parcel of land that is within the federally authorized boundary of Valley Forge National Historical Park but not owned by the National Park Service. The 78-acre parcel is part of a larger 125-acre tract of land that is in danger of housing development. Not only would the American Revolution Center, a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization, develop a museum dedicated to the Revolutionary War, but it would also preserve the remaining 47 acres as open space.

I have supported appropriating Federal funding to acquire the aforementioned land that is in jeopardy of residential development. In fiscal year 2005, I helped secure \$1.5 million for the National Park Service to begin acquiring 85 acres that were related to the 125-acre tract that is now connected with the American Revolution Center. In fiscal years 2006 and 2007, I supported the appropriation of \$9 million and \$3.1 million, respectively, for the Park Service to complete the 125-acre acquisition. However, due to increasing fiscal constraints, no funding was available at that time to continue the project. Additionally, in fiscal year 2004, I helped secure \$5 million for the National Park Service to acquire other land within the Valley Forge boundary to also prevent it from housing development.

By the American Revolution Center taking possession of this land, it is easing the financial and obligatory burden of the Federal Government to preserve this sacred ground. Additionally, I am confident that those in charge of the administration of the American Revolution Center will be responsible stewards of the historical integrity of the land and ensure its conservation for generations to come. I am also confident that the Lower Providence Township managers, the local governing branch, will appropriately manage the zoning ordinance for the 125-acre tract under current direction of the American Revolution Center to guarantee its conservation should the museum ever vacate the property.

Thus, recognizing the importance of Valley Forge to the founding of the United States, the creation of a museum to celebrate its history and preserve the park's integrity is a positive development. Local government decisions regarding private land use ought to be respected, and I strongly urge the Department of the Interior, the National Park Service, and the American Revolution Center to work cooperatively to expedite the creation of this museum, which is long overdue.

U.S. SENATE TRAVEL REGULATIONS UPDATE

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I wish to inform all Senators that the Committee on Rules and Administration has updated the U.S. Senate Travel Regulations to include two changes.

First, P.L. 110-81 requires the Rules Committee to make certain changes to