Mr. President, I stand in

support of the Syria Accountability

Act, H.R. 1828, which the House of Representatives

passed, 398–4, last month. I

am an original cosponsor of the Senate

bill, S. 982, introduced by my colleagues,

Senators SANTORUM and

BOXER, which has over 80 cosponsors as

of today. Today, I support the amendment

to H.R. 1828 submitted by my

able colleague and chairman of the

Senate Foreign Relations Committee,

Senator LUGAR, in coordination with

Senators SANTORUM and BOXER. I commend

my colleagues for their good

work.

It is well within Congress’s prerogative

to write and implement sanctions,

but the practice of doing so, as the

chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations

Committee knows so well, can

raise important points about the overall

constitutional prerogative of the

executive in its right to conduct foreign

policy. The amendment prepared

by Senator LUGAR, in cooperation with

the original sponsors of the bill, preserves

the prerogatives of both

branches of government, and, at the

same time, I believe, unifies and solidifies

our nation’s policy on the question

of terrorism, and, in particular, Syria’s

contribution to peace, stability and

progress in the Middle East.

Quite frankly, Syria has largely

failed to contribute significantly to

peace and stability in the Middle East,

a stability that U.S. blood and treasure

is now invested to achieve. We have

watched the administration give Syria

ample opportunities, since September

11, 2001, to make its contribution.

Quite frankly, Mr. President, the administration

flattered the Damascus

dictatorship by giving it this time to

join with the civilized world in unequivocally

renouncing terrorism completely,

as well as dismantling all

manifestations of material and political

support for terrorist organizations.

Some suggest that Syria has played a

game of sitting on the fence, when it

came to the war on terrorism. However,

Mr. President, Syria was never on

the fence. Syria is on the other side of

the fence, with the other state sponsors

of terrorism we have labeled as such

since 1979. And today I will agree with

what Secretary Powell told President

Assad earlier this year: By refusing to

cooperate, he was ‘‘on the wrong side of

history.’’

Since 1979, Syria has appeared every

year on the State Department’s list of

state sponsors of terrorism. It has been

so identified for its role in terrorist

acts, as well as the support it gave—

and continues to give, to this very

day—to Hamas, Palestinian Islamic

Jihad and Hezbollah, terrorist organizations

that, to this very day, organize

and commit acts of aggression or terrorism.

Throughout the 1990s, Syria played

coy with U.S. administrations attempting

to engage it in the Middle East

peace process. Who can forget the scene

of the long-suffering Secretary of

State, Warren Christopher, waiting

hours outside of Hafez Assad’s office on

his umpteenth visit, at the very same

time Iranian weapons were being transferred

to Hezbollah at the Damascus

airport? Who can forget President Clinton’s

futile attempt in Geneva, near

the end of his term and near the end of

Assad’s brutal life, to re-engage the

dictator in peace talks? On the question

of peace or normal relations with

Israel, in every aspect but the desire to

reclaim territory for itself, Syria has

most definitely been a rejectionist

state.

There are persistent reports that

Syria has a stockpile of chemical weapons,

including sarin and possibly also

VX, which it could combine with one of

the largest missile stockpiles in the

Middle East. Coalition forces are not in

Iraq to rid that former dictatorship of

its weapons of destruction while we

look the other way on similar weapons

held by another Ba’athist regime. The

era of that ideology of Arab oppression,

along with the threat of weapons of

mass destruction to maintain that oppression,

is over.

Syria has not assisted us in our historic

mission in Iraq. Joining the Security

Council in unanimous approval of

Resolution 1441, the Syrians were quick

to denounce the threat and use of force

to achieve the goals of the resolution.

Since the beginning of Operation Iraqi

Freedom, our officials—from the President,

to the Secretary of State, to the

Secretary of Defense—have publicly

criticized Syria for its lack of cooperation.

Syria’s border has remained open

to fleeing Ba’athist officials, and to

international terrorists anxious to die

fighting against Coalition forces. Our

officials believe that Syria holds up to

$3 billion of Saddam’s ill-gotten loot,

funds that the Governing Council could

use for reconstruction, funds that

would lessen the obligations we have

undertaken in this body this week.

Syria invaded Lebanon more than a

quarter-century ago, and maintains approximately

15,000 troops there to this

day. Throughout this period, Syria has

backed the Shi’ite terrorist organization,

Hezbollah, an organization that

has been tied to terrorism around the

world. Twenty years ago, a Hezbollah

suicide bomber killed almost 300 U.S.

Marines as they slept in their barracks

in Beirut. Hezbollah continues to attack

across borders, shelling Israel as

late as last week. Nothing Hezbollah

does is without Syrian sanction. The

Middle East will not see peace, and the

United States should not consider

itself secure as long as Hezbollah, with

its Syrian backers, exists.

So it is time to go to the source and

sanction Syria. This bill outlines a series

of goals and commensurate diplomatic

and economic sanctions to apply

to the Syrian regime. It maintains

flexibility of policy choice for the administration,

but it is clear in stating

the Congress’s intent, in resolve and

policy, to further isolate the decrepit

dictatorship in Damascus.

I do not know if this bill will motivate

Damascus to cross the fence and

join the anti-terror coalition of civilized

nations. I suspect that to believe

so would be pollyannaish. But I do believe

that the way we act today will declare

to the Damascus dictatorship

that there are costs to being on the

wrong side of the fence in the war on

terror.

September 11, 2001 began a new era in

U.S. foreign policy, and the President’s

policies since that watershed event

have been based on clarity of vision.

Against the threat of terrorism, which

lurks and breeds in the shadows, we

have responded with clarity of purpose.

Against the traditional approaches of

diplomacy, which balance nuance

against process, we have demanded

progress. Against previous approaches

that part-time antagonism toward a

mutual enemy should be rewarded with

full-time tolerance of non-compliance

with our stated goals, we say today: No

longer.

President Assad will receive this

message clearly. Perhaps Syria will

modify its behavior. If it does not,

Syria can join the list of rogue states

who failed because they challenged the

order of the civilized world.

The American public has read reports

in the press about Syria’s cooperation

with us in identifying, in the months

after September 11, members of Al-

Qaida. I have read no where, nor have I

heard any analyst argue, that such cooperation

was because Syria was dedicated

to our defense, or to our global

war on terrorism. Since then, the

American public has heard many members

of the current administration express

disappointment with Syria’s behavior,

and they have seen many reports

of Syria’s lack of cooperation.

And one thing is clear in a democracy,

Mr. President: Our foreign policy must

have the support of the public.

I will always respect the President’s

foreign policy prerogative, and I have

defended the executive’s prerogative

under Republican and Democratic administrations.

I have supported ‘‘quiet

diplomacy’’ for small results. But a diplomacy

that produces invisible results

is not quiet, it is silent. Today, I believe

the members of the President’s

administration agree with me.

For the reasons I have stated here,

this bill will pass overwhelmingly, as it

did in the House of Representatives. We

may consider this the Senate’s contribution

today to the war on global

terrorism.