Madam President, I

wish to speak about the crisis in Syria

and the role that one company in one

nation is playing in perpetuating the

strife.

Every day Syria descends deeper into

chaos and civil war. Since March 2011,

more than 100,000 Syrians have been

killed, an estimated 5 million have

been internally displaced, and at least

1.6 million have fled their war-torn

land. By the end of 2013, half of Syria’s

population may have left their homes.

The pressure on neighboring countries,

Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and

Iraq, is only increasing. Beyond the

refugee crisis, the resulting chaos

threatens unprecedented violence and

instability for all of Syria’s neighbors.

As Syria’s conflict grows increasingly

radical, its borders are increasably insecure.

In August 2011, now nearly 2 years

ago, President Obama declared that

Syria’s dictator, Bashar Asad, had lost

all legitimacy and ‘‘must go.’’ At the

time of that statement, the number of

Syrians butchered by the Asad regime

numbered a then-shocking 6,000. There

were frequent grim comparisons to

Bashar al-Asad’s father Hafez, who

shelled Hama for days in 1982, killing

perhaps 20,000. Now, today we see a nation

on a path to destruction and Hafez

Asad’s 20,000 dead is just a fraction of

the number his son has killed.

America must take seriously its commitment

to doing what it can to bring

an end to the Asad regime. We must

not tolerate the empowerment of forces

antithetical to our interests. And we

certainly must not be complicit in

their behavior.

The triumph of the Asad regime

would validate and encourage the murderous

behavior of leaders who spurn

democracy and the rule of law. It

would empower the belligerent regime

in Tehran and offer support to Iranian

proxies who seek to annihilate Israel

and ultimately threaten our own nation.

While we view the Asad regime with

rebellion, some others have stepped up

support for him, facilitating Asad’s

brutal success. Among these is the

Government of Russia. Russia has demonstrated

time and again its support

for Bashar Asad and its opposition to

our own humanitarian and democratic

values.

Russia has consistently thwarted

multilateral efforts to stem the violence

in Syria, including vetoing a

United Nations Security Council resolution

that would have penalized

Asad’s failure to carry out a peace

plan. It has made clear its unwavering

support for Asad’s brutality. Addressing

the compounding challenges posed

by Russian intransience has proven increasingly

difficult. The Obama administration

has made a serious effort to

engage in a direct dialog over matters

related to Syria, most recently along

the sidelines of the G8.

But that effort has not been fruitful.

Indeed, the Russian Government has

demonstrated no genuine interest in

achieving a resolution to the Syria

conflict. Moscow appears to simply

enjoy the political cover that U.S.-Russian

talks provide. Russia remains unwavering

in its support for an Asad regime

that has hosted its bases, served

Russian economic interests, and anchored

what remains of Russia’s influence

in the region.

At the same time, Moscow continues

to flout international norms. Russia is

acting antagonistically toward our Nation.

It perpetuates human rights

abuses at home. It sacrifices the wellbeing

of Russia’s orphans for the sake

of political gains. And it is sheltering

the fugitive Edward Snowden.

Russia’s state-owned arms export

firm, Rosoboronexport, has exacerbated

the crisis in Syria. Instead of

promoting a path to peace,

Rosoboronexport has provided the Syrian

Government with the means to perpetrate

widespread and systemic attacks

on its own people. It has supplied

Asad with guns, grenades, tank parts,

attack aircraft, anti-ship cruise missiles,

and air defense missiles, which

his regime in turn uses to perpetuate

its rule and murder innocent civilians.

Rosoboronexport also has made a commitment

to provide Syria with S–300

advanced anti-aircraft missiles that

would protect Syrian air dominance

and facilitate its continued attacks on

its civilian population.

These weapons do not threaten the

Syrian people alone. They challenge

American interests in the region, including

the safety and security of

Israel.

Let’s look at one particular example

that has received a good deal of international

attention. It is certainly possible

that NATO or our own Nation

may decide it is necessary to create a

no-fly zone over Syria to stop the carnage.

Russian-provided S–300s would

present a major threat to U.S. or allied

aircraft and pilots seeking to establish

such a zone. They would also pose a direct

threat to Israeli civil and military

air traffic.

The Russian transfer of weapons to

Syria is not just inhumane, but it is a

violation of U.S. law. The Iran Threat

Reduction and Syria Human Rights

Act of 2012 and the Iran, North Korea,

and Syria Nonproliferation Accountability

Act, as well as Executive Orders

13382 and 13582 all demand sanctions

against ‘‘those entities that materially

assist, or provide support for, the Government

of Syria.’’

In addition, the fiscal year 2013 National

Defense Authorization Act prohibits

contracts with Rosoboronexport,

and section 1233 of S. 1197, the National

Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal

Year 2014, which was passed by the Senate

Armed Services Committee, prohibits

the use of funds to enter contracts

with Rosoboronexport.

In light of the lack of progress of diplomatic

efforts to end Russian support

for the Asad regime and the direct nature

of the threat these escalating

arms sales pose, it is incumbent upon

the U.S. Government to pursue more

aggressive measures as mandated by

U.S. law to create incentives for the

Russians to change their behavior. Indeed,

Senator KELLY AYOTTE and I

have written to the President urging

that he take this course.

With the exception of particular circumstances

of true military necessity,

the administration must end all financial

dealings with Rosoboronexport and

begin to impose sanctions against

Rosoboronexport.

We must also impose sanctions

against any Russian manufacturers

that provide military equipment such

as advanced anti-aircraft systems to

Syria in contravention of U.S. law.

In my view, it is unconscionable for

us to provide Russia with the recently

announced $550 million contract for 30

additional Mi-17 helicopters, a purchase

the Special Inspector General for

Afghanistan Reconstruction has

strongly advised against.

American taxpayer dollars should

not be provided to a Russian stateowned

corporation that is complicit in

the murder of tens of thousands of innocent

Syrian men, women, and children.

The Department of Defense has

the authority to end this contract with

Rosoboronexport, which fails to meet

the requirements of the Afghan military,

and I have joined many of my colleagues

in urging the administration to

review this sale.

The United States must not be

complicit in the arming of the Asad regime

nor in the empowerment of countries

like Iran, which will triumph if

Asad succeeds. I urge the administration

to impose sanctions on

Rosoboronexport and to demonstrate

to Russia that its behavior in Syria

will not be cost-free in its relations

with our Nation.