Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I am delighted with our first panel from the State Department.

I have very high regard for both gentlemen, as well as our second

panel, which I am anxious to hear.

I suggest we basically have three options with regard to our policy

toward Syria right now. But I think there is a reality that we

should all just sort of face up to. That is, I for one think that Syrian

conduct relative to its neighbors, to support for terror, to opening

up its economy, and every other aspect that we are going to examine

about Syria’s present government and Syria’s present activity,

as well as the bilateral relationship with the United States, in

my view depends almost wholly upon our success or failure in Iraq.

If in fact we are successful and stay the course in securing the

peace and a stable government in Iraq, I think it will have a transforming

impact upon Syrian conduct. Quite frankly, if we—if any

of the scenarios that are discussed that relate to failure, either

pulling out prematurely or not being able to secure the peace and

a transition to a government viewed as legitimate—that is, essentially

a representative republic—then I think it is Katy bar the

door.

I think we will reap the whirlwind, not, quite frankly, just in

Syria, but in the entire region. I think it will be the end of modernity,

any notions of it in the Arab world. I think it will temporarily

bring to a halt any reasonable prospect of any notions of democratization,

and it will end, I think for the foreseeable future, the prospects

of nation states in the region cooperating in curtailing terrorist

organizations, cabining their capability. It will have the exact

opposite effect.

I quite frankly think Bashar Asad has two people looking over—

two circumstances looking over his shoulder: his father’s old cabinet.

When I sat with him, and I think we were together, Dick—

I cannot recall, to be honest with you now, I have made so many

trips lately—in his office for an hour and a half, it was interesting

to watch. In our business, after doing this for 3 decades, part of

what the plain old politician part of us hopefully brings to the table

is we are not all that bad at assessing what the other guy is thinking

or what the other guy’s motives are or what the other guy

needs in the deal.

I sat there and I looked at a guy who looked to me very conflicted.

On the one hand he was modern enough to understand

there had to be significant change in his country. On the other

hand, every time he would even squint in that direction there

would be a foreign minister or someone else sitting there glaring,

literally, at him. I mean that in the literal sense.

So that is one. Assuming Asad is attempting to moderate or ameliorate

his relationships in the region, he has that one problem.

The second problem he has is he is sitting atop a part of the world,

in a part of the world, he just has no idea which way it is going

to go right now. The honest to God truth is—and everyone with

whom I speak in the world—and I told this bad joke; I might as

well tell it again because it sort of is a homely way of explaining

it.

There used to be a joke about the coach who had a center fielder

who in four innings made seven errors. And he pulls George out

and he puts in Joe or John. The first play after he puts in John

is a routine pop fly to center field and John drops the ball. The

coach goes crazy. He calls time out and calls John in, says: What

the devil is the matter with you, John? John looks at the coach and

says: Coach, George screwed up center field so badly no one can

play it.

Well, the truth of the matter is the rest of the world is looking

right now. It is a bit of humor. Sometimes you need a little bit of

humor to leaven how deadly serious this is. But I still think it is

fully within our grasp to secure the peace in Iraq, but it is going

to require some significant further change in policy to do so in my

view.

I think the rest of the world is standing around looking now: Do

I want to play in center field? I am not at all sure. I am not at

all sure friend or foes have reached a conclusion as to what the outcome

is going to be. But when they reach that conclusion I think

it is going to impact upon and inform their judgments on every

other aspect of their relationship with us in the region.

So we will talk about the Syria Accountability Act. We will talk

about a number of other things here. But I just want to be clear,

which I have been earlier with both the State Department personnel

here, that I am going to ask their view at some point about

how connected they think the possibilities are with regard to Syria

and success or failure in Iraq.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I thank you and I yield.

Thank you, gentlemen.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, again welcome. I say this not in any pejorative way.

The neoconservative view and influence within the administration

has argued and written fairly extensively that our use of power

when necessary, particularly in the face of the disapprobation of

the rest of the world, presents us with an opportunity to leverage

that power to get malcontents in other parts of the world to

straighten up, as my uncle used to say, straighten up and fly right.

I think there is some truth to what they say, what they write.

Some in the administration and some close advisers to the administration

outside the administration argue that when we moved successfully

in Iraq and our shock and awe program or initiative that

we would see a change in behavior on the part of Syria relative to

all our concerns, particularly support for terrorists.

It looked like, for a moment anyway, or at least temporarily,

when the Secretary of State made his visit to meet with the president

of Syria shortly after the Syrians miscalculated in that they

thought we would have a longer slog, to use a term from our Secretary

of Defense, in bringing about the collapse of the Syria regime,

they looked like they were going to take some concrete actions.

If I am not mistaken, we demarched them with some specific

requests relating to the location, the support, the visibility, the

headquarters of and the offices of Hizballah and others.

The initial, if memory serves me, the initial response seemed to

be that they were going to take some action, and they did take

some at least cosmetic actions. There were proposals from some of

us—and I am not suggesting they were not shared by State or the

President—that one of the things that we could do to also aid and

abet the effort on the Road Map would be to insist that the Syrians

allow the Lebanese army to replace on the Israeli border the forces

that are there now, and that would have taken, the assumption

was, the acquiescence at least of the Syrians, if not the direct intervention

of the Syrians.

So we all kind of waited to see what was likely to happen. Am

I correct in suggesting that at the end of the day, that is today, not

much did happen, notwithstanding what we may or may not have

thought would happen after the visit of the Secretary of State? This

is no veiled criticism of the Secretary of State. Did we see any activity

initially and if we did, did it change? Or where are we today

in terms of the specific requests made by the United States of

America to the Syrian government to close down offices, etcetera?

I understand that cooperation between Syria and

our military in the Mosul area of Iraq has been pretty good, with

cross-border trade picking up, Iraqi oil being exported to Syria. And

you both know better than I, this region of Iraq has had close historical

ties with Syria.

Now, the question that I keep wrestling with—and our witnesses

I expect will speak to this a little bit as well—is, there is no doubt

in my mind, and I may be wrong, but there is no doubt in my mind

that the degree to which cooperation will take place on this broad

front of concerns we have is directly related to whether or not they

believe we are going to succeed in the region, in Iraq.

Prior to us going into Iraq, a number of us made visits to heads

of state throughout the region, and privately every head of state

did say what the administration was saying they were privately

saying: We have no love for Saddam Hussein; take him down, but

if you take him down make sure you finish the job. I do not know

how many times I heard that stated.

That was the drumbeat in the background of the administration

saying: Although the world says they are against us, they are really

not against us; they are really for us doing this. But the tagline

always was: Get the job finished, meaning establish stability when

it is all said and done. Do not just replace him—I mean, do not just

topple him, but replace him.

So there is no doubt in my mind that what you are seeing is a

sort of temporary paralysis in the region deciding which way is in

my naked self-interest to go, based on whether the Americans are

going to finish the job. But what I do not have a sense of—and I

realize this is a fairly broad question, but I respect both your judgments,

and that is why I am asking it—what does your instinct tell

you about whether or not they would like us to succeed in Iraq?

I am ambivalent on that point. I am not—I can see a scenario

where if I am sitting in Damascus it is very much in my interest

for there to be on the one side a stable non-threatening Iraq to my

north. On the other side, I can say: Well, God, I hope any of those

notions of democracy or representative government do not spread

to me; it could be dangerous.

Have you run the calculus as to whether or not—not whether or

not they are trying to make it more difficult and not whether or

not their feinting and bobbing and weaving has anything to do with

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the outcome. What do you think they think is in their interest?

And is it split within Syria between the old guard, if there is an

old and new guard, because that is another—you know, we always

look for these things. We are always looking for Jeffersons behind

some rock somewhere who is going to pop up and democratize a nation.

They seldom, if ever, exist.

But I realize the question is fairly broad, but would you be willing

to engage us a little bit in your sense of what you think Iraq

would—I mean, what you think Syria would view as in their interest

relative to Iraq? The reason I ask the question—and I conclude

with this—is because assume there was—it was in their interest

for them to have a say in what emerges in Baghdad whenever.

Then is the six plus two arrangement that we used in Afghanistan,

does that have any—is there any reason for us to be engaging

Syria about the future of Iraq?

That is more like an essay question. I apologize, but I would appreciate

it if you would just speak to us a little bit about that.

Mr. Black, do you have any comment?

I am anxious to get to the second panel as well,

Mr. Chairman, but I have one question.

Bill, can you tell us a little bit about U.S.-European attitudes

and where they diverge relative to Syria? The Europeans historically

have had a slightly different take on all the Middle East,

quite frankly, than we have. That does not suggest that their take

has anything to do—that it is intentionally counterproductive to

our interests.

But do our allies in Europe agree with our approach to Syria? Is

there any realistic possibility of getting on the same page and forging

a united front with regard to Syria and their support of terror?

Tell me a little bit about—you should have a lot of discussions with

them as well. I mean, where are we in terms of that dynamic?

Well, it seems to me that to the extent that we

could harmonize those views we would have a—maybe I have been

here too long, but I remember when we used to say—I remember

when the gentleman about to testify was ambassador in that area

of the world and we always talked about it in terms of U.S.-Soviet

influence, and we talked about the Syrians having a godfather to

the north and the reason we were not going to make much progress

with Syria.

And when the wall came down and when the Soviet empire

crumbled and the ability of or the desire, both ability and desire,

of the former Soviets, now Russians, was not nearly as invasive or

involved or as capable of affecting events, there was the brief moment

where there was hope that the rest of the world united would

be able to bring some sense with a common purpose, a common

front.

It seems to me that is one of the real lost opportunities. I do not

mean just—I am not talking about this administration, the last administration.

I mean, rationalizing the policy to the extent that you

can.

I did not tell the truth there. I have one more question. Mr.

Black, I asked you this in a different context, but if you are able

to publicly answer this it would be useful. Has the United States

concluded that weapons of mass destruction from Iraq were dispersed

to Syria, as General Clapper of the National Imagery and

Mapping Agency told the New York Times? Do you have any hard

evidence that that is the case, as stated by Clapper, General Clapper,

that Iraqis did disperse to Syria weapons of mass destruction?

Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Jouejati, you and Professor Clawson come at

this completely differently. You basically say that you have to get

the Palestinian-Israeli track, the Israeli-Syrian track, settled before

you are going to make any progress on these other things. And Dr.

Clawson, unless I misunderstand him, says it is going to work the

other way; you will be able to get some progress moving the other

way before you get to the Golan.

Could you, because you seem very certain of what you are saying,

could you tell us what you think Syria believes it needs in order

to, quote, ‘‘do a deal’’? What is it do you believe—how far would the

Israelis have to go to get yes for an answer in terms of at least the

Israeli-Syrian relationship?

Oh, I got that. Look, we have an old expression

where I come from: Let us not kid a kidder. We all know what the

UN resolutions are.

I would like you to be as specific with me as you were on other

parts of your views about Syria. What specifically is it? Is it—I

mean, can you describe it, not in the context of UN resolutions, in

the context of concrete action that you believe would have to occur

in order for Syria to say, we have got a deal with Israel?

Excuse me. What you just said contradicts that.

You just said that it would have to be the total withdrawal and

there would have to be progress, whatever, not defined, progress

with regard to the rest of the issue with the Palestinians.

So this notion of two tracks is one that goes to

a dead end from your standpoint? There is no possibility of a twotrack

solution, unless the second track simultaneously ends where

the first track ends and consistent with what the Syrians think is

the appropriate settlement, correct?

But what would the former Asad and the present

one do if that were delivered? I mean, you know, delivery is a twoway

street. What delivery would come? Would they cease and desist

supporting Hizballah? Would they call effectively a time out

while the negotiation went on? Would they, as for example the

practical—I am not trying to be argumentative. I am trying to understand.

Practically speaking, you could have a circumstance

where you had a—Hizballah and Syria have two different agendas.

Hizballah’s clear agenda is no Israel, period.

Now, that I assume is not Syria’s agenda. Syria’s agenda is a settlement

between, that is fair, and establishment of a Palestinian

state that is free and fairly arrived at, and total withdrawal to the

pre-June borders, the June 4 borders before the war, on the Golan.

But my dilemma here is when folks like you talk to me about

this, I mean from both perspectives, is that you never connect all

the dots. There is a third dot and the third dot that matters most

to Israel, assuming Israel were acting from your perspective much

more rationally, is that terrorists cease and desist and support for

terrorists cease and desists.

But it is clear that the Jihad and Hizballah has made it very

clear it will not cease and desist, period, until there is no Israel.

They are not signed onto a two-state solution. They have not signed

onto the notion that there would be any compromise on Jerusalem,

compromise on anything.

So it seems to me your prescription for how to proceed with Syria

is fundamentally flawed. Explain to me why I am wrong about

that?

Got that.

That would be a wonderful thing as long, that

flag waving over it, if they were not still funding and supporting

Hizballah. Let us get to Hizballah.

Got that.

Why is there no need? Because remember, the

second part of your equation here is that the Palestinian track has

to be one, since they view themselves, the Syrians, as the leader

of the Arab world and the region, is that the Palestinians have to

be satisfied. And yet you have the very people they are funding

now saying there is no satisfaction available short of elimination of

the state of Israel. So that is what confuses me.

Well, I know, I know—

Yes, the ones that they are supporting. So what

I want to know is what gets them to stop supporting those groups?

Notwithstanding the fact that it is not sufficient

for the very groups they are supporting?

Well, that is kind of encouraging, because the

truth of the matter is, you know, Israel does not have much to

worry about from Syria except their support for terrorist groups. I

mean, what the hell difference does it make to Israel whether it

has peace with Syria but for that issue? I mean, what flows from

there other than that? So that seems to me to be the ultimate.

We talk about carrots and sticks. We talk about who needs what.

Syria very much wants to regain its self-respect, wants to regain

the Golan, wants Israel off, quote, ‘‘its’’ territory. I understand that

part of the equation. But I do not know what, absent an up-front

acknowledgment, if that occurs, there will be a ceasing and desisting.

In my conversations in Syria, the kind of thing that I heard—

we all hear all kinds of conversations, Mr. Ambassador; we all get

told different things; it is not a monolithic voice that comes out of

Damascus or any country—is that the fact of the matter is that we

cannot be seen as letting down the Palestinians, and the voice of

Mr. Arafat now and the voice of Hizballah and the voice of the

Fatah and the voice is simply one that suggests right now that

there is no—there is no outline for peace that falls within the

framework of all those groups.

There is an outline for peace that falls within the framework of

the negotiations of the vast majority of the Palestinians and everybody

knows what they are. I mean, like you said, Mr. Leverett, everybody

knows what is needed in these various deals. Everybody

knows there has got to be compromise on Jerusalem, not absolute.

Everybody knows that there has got to be elimination of the vast

majority of the settlements, but compromise on the remaining some

of the settlements. Everybody knows there—everybody knows the

pieces. Everybody knows there cannot be an absolute right of return.

Yet those basic points are fundamentally rejected by, they are

nonstarters for, the very groups that are blowing up people right

now. So I do not—I find it—I have lost, quite frankly, faith in the

credibility of Mr. Arafat and-or Mr. Asad and others without their

up-front acknowledgment that they are the elements they are willing

to negotiate, which is a de facto, a de facto disagreement with

the very people that are blowing folks up.

Anyway, I am taking too much time, but I find it—and I also

have—I mean, carrots and sticks. It is self-evident that if they stop

supporting these groups, Mr. Leverett, they will be taken off the

terrorist list. They know that. How is that a carrot? How is that

a carrot? I do not get that. I do not see any carrots here you are

offering, and the sticks you are offering are ones that I think you

have all figured out. Asad knows the stick is not going to be—this

President has no capacity as a political matter to invade Syria now.

Give me any evidence of that based on their conduct?

I see zero evidence of that. The evidence of that

relates to the progress being taken on the ground in the regions

that we are occupying in the areas that they have been cooperating.

I think you guys are smoking something. I mean, I do not

see this at all. I mean, I think this is like an academic exercise at

a great university about how we write the term paper.

I mean, I really think there is very little connection to reality

here, because the converse is true. If in fact they were worried

about our actions and Congress’s actions and the President’s

threats, there would have been a continuum of the cooperation that

began immediately after, immediately after, we invaded Iraq,

which then there was some accountability, because they really were

worried that the voices of the Richard Perles and the Wolfowitzes

and the neocons may in fact be not an echo, but be the voice of

America, and there are 120,000 troops sitting on their northern

border and they were worried they would pivot and move south.

Once they figured out that there was no possibility of them pivoting

anywhere, all of a sudden things began to change. At least

I think that. It is presumptuous of me to say. I do not know that

any more than you know that there has been any movement based

upon the Syria Accountability Act.

Anyway, I am frustrated, as you can see. But I am sure you all

are from a lifetime of dealing with it.

Well, they froze the assets, then they drew down

the assets to pay off what was owed to them by the Iraqis, and now

they are ready to talk about the rest of the assets. That seems to

me to be logical, but it does not demonstrate a new-found cooperation.

I hope you are right. There is decreased cooperation

in al-Qaeda. There is decreased cooperation in other areas, but

it is kind of interesting. But go ahead.

Oh, yes, I am saying that.

Are you comparing him to Hamas and Jihad?

Ambassador MURPHY I am comparing his absolute view that that

is the only solution for Israel with the Hamas view that Israel

should not exist.

I see.

Well, I agree with that. That does not constitute

a change in their attitude.

Why?

Why?

I think I do and I think you do.

Bingo.

Bingo.

No, I think those are fully sufficient. Some might

argue that was the case because Israel may decide to go beyond

what they did, speaking of sticks.

We thank you all very, very much.