Thank you, sir. Let me summarize my statement,

please.

Since assuming the Syrian presidency in June 2000 on the death

of his father, Hafez Al-Asad, Bashar Asad has established a track

record. The regime change in Syria has been bad for Syria, bad for

the Middle East, and bad for U.S.-Syrian relations. In every area

of concern to the United States, Bashar Asad’s rule has been worse

than that of his father, which is impressive given how bad a ruler

was his father, and the problems are growing, not diminishing.

Let me just briefly summarize the areas where Bashar’s track

record has been worse than that of Hafez Asad. On the areas

where we had differences with Hafez Asad and where we had good

reason to hope that Bashar would make a difference, things have

gotten worse. For instance, anti-peace process terrorism. My boss,

the Director of the Washington Institute, Dennis Ross, has written

in the *Wall Street Journal,* ‘‘Hafez Asad was no slouch when it

came to threatening Israel, but he controlled the flow of Iranian

arms to Hizballah and he never provided Syrian weapons directly.

Bashar Asad seems to lack his father’s sense of limits.’’

Hafez Asad never met with the secretary general of Hizballah,

Mr. Nasrollah. Bashar Asad meets with him frequently and treats

him like his senior adviser and mentor.

Second, weapons of mass destruction. Rather than just maintaining

the already troubling capabilities that Syria had when he came

to office, Bashar Asad has plowed ahead with developing more sophisticated

capabilities, worse chemical weapons, and longer range

missiles.

On Lebanon, despite Israeli withdrawal in May 2000, Bashar

Asad has insisted that Hizballah retain its arms, thereby making

it a destabilizing and radical force in Lebanese politics.

On economic and political reform, the great hope was that

Bashar Asad would make economic growth his priority, and indeed

there was a Damascus spring with limited liberalization when he

came to office. But winter set in early. For participating in civil society

meetings 2 years ago, 10 human rights activists have been

sentenced to prison for 2 to 5 years and just this week a military

court is trying 14 more human rights activists.

On the areas where Hafez Asad had some minimal cooperation

with U.S. interests, things have gotten worse under Bashar. Peace

negotiations with Israel, they are completely shut down. Damascus

now rarely bothers to pretend that it is willing to talk to Israel. On

the issue of Iraq, under Hafez Asad for better than 10 years there

was a ‘‘do no evil’’ approach, not getting in the way of U.S. policy

towards Iraq. Now, instead Bashar Asad has shown a willingness

to work with the worst forces in Iraq. Not only did he cooperate

closely with Saddam Hussein on economic relations while Syria

was still in power, but even as Saddam’s regime was falling Bashar

Asad remained friendly and provided assistance to the Saddamites.

Then finally there is the question of radical Islamist terrorism.

One can complain about many things about Hafez Asad, but he had

a firm hand, indeed a cruel and inhuman hand, toward Islamist

terrorists. Bashar Asad I am afraid has changed that approach.

Initially, after the September 11th, 2001, attacks Syria did cooperate

with the United States against al-Qaeda, but that has changed.

Ambassador Black, Mr. Black, was referring earlier to our ambiguous—

our dissatisfaction, excuse me, with the ambiguous record of

the Syrians. Let me just note, there was a very interesting case in

Italy recently in which the Italian prosecutors going after an al-

Qaeda cell showed that Syria, in their words, had ‘‘functioned as

a hub for an al-Qaeda network,’’ and the detailed telephone wiretaps

that the Italian police presented showed how this al-Qaeda

cell had been coordinating its activities in Syria and through Syria.

So Bashar Asad seems to be campaigning to join the axis of evil.

He needs to be confronted with a starker choice: bigger sticks if he

persists in his path, but bigger carrots if he makes significant

progress in some of the areas of our concern.

Whether or not the Syria Accountability Act becomes law, the

United States has a variety of other instruments it could use to

turn up the heat on Syria. The Asad regime cares deeply about

statements by top U.S. officials about the legitimacy of that government

and there is much that we can do to reach out to support prodemocracy

activists in Washington. It is interesting to note that in

2 weeks time there will be a meeting here in Washington of Syrian

pro-democracy activists.

Two years ago, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy

published an optimistic monograph full of hope the Bashar Asad

would improve governance, open up Syria to the outside world, let

Lebanon regain its sovereignty, and make peace with Israel. That

study, prepared under my direction by an Israeli scholar, showed

what an opportunity Bashar Asad had. He has not made good use

of his first 3 years.

Let us hope that, if faced with starker choices between a better

future and real risks for his regime, he will make better use of the

coming years.

Thank you, sir.

I would be very pessimistic about progress soon on

a Syrian-Israeli peace because, as all of us has emphasized, Bashar

has found it extremely difficult to break with the old guard of the

past. And for him to accept a deal which his father refused would

be dynamite in the Syrian political scene. Since the deal which in

fact Bashar—excuse me—Hafez Asad refused when offered him by

President Clinton in Geneva in the spring of the year 2000 was extraordinarily

close to what it was the Syrians had long told us they

would insist on, involving an extraordinarily extensive Israeli withdrawal,

I think it would be very difficult, very difficult, for Bashar

to make progress on this front.

I am more optimistic on some of the other fronts. I think there

is some real prospects that we could make progress on the Lebanon

issue, on Hizballah, on Iraq, and I think that that could create an

environment where down the road we could imagine getting back

to the kind of Geneva deal, which is about the best that we are

going to see for the Syrians.

That would help, but I also think he could consolidate

his authority and confidence in his rule faster if he can show

that he can deliver on some of these other issues and get some of

the carrots that Flynt was mentioning. And I would quite agree

with him.

My great concern is at the moment Bashar does not believe that

there are any sticks in the United States. He looks at what happened

with the oil pipeline from Iraq, where we talked tough and

we did not do a darn thing about it, and he directly liked to Colin

Powell about it, and yet there were no consequences as far as he

could see. He continued to get the revenue.

So he does not believe that there are any sticks from us and he

does not believe there are any carrots from us. So he does not see

any reason to change his behavior.

Senator, do not underestimate how much Mr. Asad

cares about the kind of rhetorical stance that we take, and how the

kind of coverage that has been given to the deliberations in Congress

over the Syria Accountability Act indicates that Damascus is

hypersensitive to the kinds of things we have to say. I think that

Damascus, for instance—

What we heard from the first panel was that in

the last few weeks there has been greater cooperation around the

question of the $3 billion in funds and about border control. I think

that that is distinctly related to the progress that the Syria Accountability

Act—

At an Arab summit 2 years ago, Bashar Asad is

reported to have told the other Arab leaders that they can ignore

the words coming out of Washington because Washington’s words

do not mean very much and the United States does not do very

much to back up either its threats or its promises. I think that is

very much an attitude that he has displayed over the last 2 years.

It is very hard for us to get his attention and to take very seriously

what we say either way, about sticks or carrots. So it is important

that we measure our words and that we find a way to demonstrate

our credibility to this fellow, who unfortunately does not

take us very seriously. To the extent that he does take us seriously,

then I think that we can get some degree of cooperation out of him

through a combination of sticks and carrots.

But at the moment we have quite low credibility with him because

he does not think that we carry through very much on what

we say. The episode with the oil pipeline from Iraq has hurt us

very, very badly in that regard, because he was making an awful

lot of money off that pipeline and he directly promised the Secretary

of State that that pipeline would not be opened until the

money was put under the UN, and he knew the Secretary of State

had the President woken up to be told this wonderful news. Yet,

when Bashar paid no attention to that there was no consequence

from the United States.

It would not have been hard for us to bomb the pumping stations

inside Iraq and to shut that pipeline down. We did not do it, and

as a result we have very little credibility with this guy and it is

going to take a long time to reestablish that credibility.

But I would hope that we can do that by offering measured and

small, small, sticks, which is all we are doing with the Syria Accountability

Act, and I would offer some small carrots and I suggested

some, like computer education and any potentially discussing

debt relief, meanwhile coordinating with the Europeans,

who have got this great big carrot that they are dangling in front

of the Syrians at the moment, this Trade Association Agreement

that they have been negotiating for decades.

For gosh sakes, let us persuade the Europeans that before they

sign that, get something from the guy. Based on what the Europeans

have done with the Iranians, which is said no progress on

economics until there is progress on human rights and on weapons

of mass destruction, on the peace process, on terrorism, let us ask

the Europeans: Okay, what can we do to work with you to see that

you take that same approach regarding Syria.