

# UPDATE ON LEBANON

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HEARING  
BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

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## UPDATE ON LEBANON

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TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2009

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST  
AND SOUTH ASIA,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:14 p.m. in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, the Honorable Gary L. Ackerman (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. ACKERMAN. The committee will come to order.

Among the great speeches in American history is President Kennedy's inaugural address in 1960. With the Cold War accelerating toward a catastrophe that almost came in October 1962, Kennedy proposed a new beginning. Addressing "those nations who would make themselves our adversary" the President offered "not a pledge but a request: That both sides begin anew the quest for peace."

Cognizant that cynics might misunderstand his intent, President Kennedy reminded all those listening, "that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof. Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate."

These simple words convey the character of American foreign policy properly understood, and were echoed recently by President Obama who promised even "those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent" that "we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist."

I am pleased today that we are joined by Acting Assistant Secretary of State Jeffrey D. Feltman, who returned recently from an effort to put into action this approach to our national security. If anyone can deliver the message that engagement with Syria will not be paid for in Lebanese coin—and this is a message that needs to be repeated again and again—it is Ambassador Feltman.

America's interests in Lebanon can easily be summed up: Sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. We want Lebanon to be ruled by the Lebanese, for the Lebanese. A pluralistic democracy in landscape mostly occupied by strongmen and tyrants, Lebanon is, sadly, a canary in the Middle East coal mine. If Lebanon can be free; if Lebanon can find space for all the different voices and religions and convictions within it; if Lebanon can continue to exist with one foot in the West and the other in the Arab world; if Lebanon can simply be a normal country and not a battleground for outside powers; then our interests, and I think those of most Lebanese, will be fully satisfied.

We seek a partner, not an outpost. We want an ally, not a proxy. And we must continue to aid those Lebanese committed to their country's freedom from foreign rule or domination.

Lebanon is approaching a crossroads. The elections which will take place in June will have a powerful effect on the country's future, and I believe that we and Lebanon's friends in the international community must be vigilant and active in the days leading to the contest.

The real work of winning the election must be done in Lebanon by the Lebanese. It is their campaign to run, it is their future on the line, and it is their message that must resonate with their electorate. One side can offer a future of peace and prosperity. The other can promise only dogma and destruction. But unless the forces of progress achieve real coordination and meaningful compromise with each other, their prospects, both before and after the election, will be greatly diminished.

The United States cannot and should not interfere in the election. The campaign and the election are for the Lebanese to succeed or fail in on their own. But neither should we be impassive. There is much that we can do and should do on the outside to demonstrate that Lebanon's future is not dependent on either militias or mullahs.

The Special Tribunal for Lebanon has begun, and the United States must continue to be a strong advocate for this body. More significantly, in addition to providing funds for its operation, American diplomats, in every country and context, must continue to insist on the Tribunal's continued importance and on the validity of its work. Especially in the Middle East, there is a tendency to believe that there is a reality behind reality. So, in word and deed we must continue to make clear that there is no deal on the Tribunal, and there will be no deal on the Tribunal. Period. Full stop.

We need to continue and enhance our support for the Lebanese Armed Forces, the LAF, and the Internal Security Forces, the ISF. These institutions enjoy strong support throughout Lebanon, and have a pressing mission in battling terrorists activated and armed by foreign powers. I am a strong proponent of maintaining Israel's Qualitative Military Advantage, but there is nothing that we are providing to the LAF and the ISF that has, or will, endanger Israel's defense capabilities.

There is a very large space between the capabilities needed to effectively challenge the IDF and those needed to tackle a terrorist group like the Fatah al-Isam, that in 2007 held off the LAF for 3 months in the Nahr al-Bared camp. Even erring on the side of caution, something on which I would insist, the LAF has real needs that I believe we can help fill without endangering Israel.

But we also need to look closely at the points of friction between Israel and Lebanon which pose a significant risk to regional security. One thing we should have learned about the Arab-Israeli conflict is that it rarely gets better on its own, and that problems left unresolved do not ameliorate, but fester. The United States needs to initiate and lead a process to help resolve the immediate conflicts over borders and territory, Lebanese air space, and locating unexploded munitions from 2006. Doing so will not only dem-

onstrate that diplomacy works, but that American assistance can improve security for all sides.

What we, and our friends in Lebanon need to offer is hope; not as a method for solving problems, but as a source of energy and a reason for continuing to struggle for something much better. Lebanon's future is not yet written; it does not have to be one of civil war and foreign conflict. Lebanon's best and brightest should not have to leave the country in order to live normal lives. Lebanon's landscape does not need to be scarred with wreckage and its leaders need not live in fear of their very lives. None of that is necessary. But the Lebanese people will have to choose to make it so. And if they do, they should have no better partner in their efforts than the United States.

Mr. Rohrabacher.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ackerman follows:]

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**“Update on Lebanon”**  
**Rep. Gary L. Ackerman, Chairman**  
**House Subcommittee on the Middle East & South Asia**

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###

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am today sitting in for Mr. Burton who is engaging in debate on the floor of the House. However, I would have been at the hearing anyway as I am a member of the committee. So let me just a few thoughts in the opening statement for myself and not for Mr. Burton, although I am here in his place.

Mr. Chairman, you just mentioned the concept that President Obama expressed during the election, it is one of the issues he brought up, which is not being afraid to talk to anyone, and let me note that Ronald Reagan had that strategy as well. Ronald Reagan said very clearly that we should be very nice to people and be willing to talk, but very tough when it comes to policy. And I have always agreed with that concept, but not being afraid to talk is something totally different than making sure that when you speak to a dictatorship or a group of gangster that you are doing so responsibly and in a way that will not bolster the position of those evil doers, so to speak.

Simply expressing our openness and trying to reach out to a totalitarian regime will not make it better. The Iranian mullahs, for example, know exactly what their position is. You know, we are not trying to fool them and they are not trying to fool us, and I am afraid that by thinking that we are going to sway them by some sort of benevolent expressions or by including their own description of their regime may have horrible consequences.

For example, by suggesting for the first time that the people of Iran are ruled by a legitimate government by calling it, by referring to them as the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran rather than just the Iranian people, perhaps what we have done is demoralized the very people in Iran who we want to have as our closest allies, and I would hope that any contact that we have with Syria does not make this same mistake of having a communication that seems to verify the legitimacy of the tough guys who we are talking to.

Let me note that we have with us today a young man who led the demonstrations at the universities in Iran 10 years ago. He is a young man who has been very active in resisting and organizing resistance to the mullah since then, and I would like to just have Mr. Ruzabah please stand up. Right there, a young man, a courageous young man who is standing against the mullah dictatorship in Iran. Thank you for joining us here today.

We have to make sure that people like this young man who live in Syria are not demoralized—who want democracy for their country, the people throughout the Middle East who want to have peace and prosperity and democracy, and want to live not only peace with their neighbors, but want to be part of a global system of harmony and justice, that we do not demoralize those people, and what I am afraid of is that if we try to bend over backwards too far with Syria, and we become just too sincere in our openness and expressions to the Syrian leadership, thinking that that is what will sway them, it will have the opposite impact because it will demoralize those people in Syria who too would like to be friends with the United States and friends of democracy, and live at peace with the world.

I would suggest, first of all, to note, and this will shock some of my friends, that we do have to recognize that Lebanon was in chaos and confusion and bloodshed before the Syrian intervention. And if we expect the Syrians to listen to us, we should understand and recognize that.

But what happens when a non-democratic government interferes with military force, and it did some good right off the bat by ending that chaos and bloodshed that was going on unabated in Lebanon? What happens if someone overstays their welcome and stays too long is eventually the situation deteriorates, and clearly now Syria is playing and has been playing for a number of years a negative, a highly negative role in Lebanon, and we need to tell the Syrians, and make it clear to them, if we are just going to talk with anybody, let us be tough on policy. We no longer can tolerate the type of assassinations and interference that Syria has been doing in Lebanon.

And if there is going to be a peace, a bigger peace and a greater peace in the Middle East, and democracy, and there is going to be some kind of an order established, yes, Syria has to be included, but we know that it must be based on respecting the rights of the people of Lebanon to run their own country, and that has to be respected and demanded by the United States in our negotiations with Syria.

With that, I am looking forward to hearing a firsthand report, giving us an update as to where these discussions might go, what are the chances for success, and the upcoming elections, as you mentioned, Mr. Chairman, are something that should—we should be making sure that we focus on those elections and make sure that they are a success, and that outside forces, like those in Syria, do not manipulate this turning point in Lebanese history.

So, with that, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am looking forward to the testimony.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Rohrabacher.

I will just note that whenever you quote Ronald Reagan, knowing that you were one of his speechwriters, I do not marvel at the fact that you do not look down to read the quote that he said. [Laughter.]

Mr. Costa.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am looking forward to hearing the testimony from our witness, and I will defer.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Ellison.

Mr. ELLISON. Thank you for holding the hearing, Mr. Chair. I look forward to hearing from the witnesses, and I want to welcome the Ambassador here with us, and look forward to what he would have to share with us. I am particularly interested in the reopening of the Hariri investigation and also have an interest in learning about the—I guess there were two Palestinian leaders who were killed in Lebanon recently. I would like to know what the Ambassador can share with us about that subject, and then also what prospects for United States-Syrian, Lebanon-Syrian relations can take place. I am anxious to hear about his recent trip to Syria that the administration sent him on.

So, again, thank you Mr. Ambassador. I anxiously wait to hear your remarks.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Fortenberry.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Just briefly, Mr. Chairman, to say welcome, Mr. Ambassador. The last time we met a number of years ago in Lebanon you were confined to your job, so to speak. It is nice to see you were able to come home. So welcome today.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Klein.

Mr. KLEIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Ambassador, for joining us today. We had the chance, the chairman and a number of us, to travel to Beirut a couple of months ago to see firsthand, meet with the military leaders, meet with the political leaders, and obviously look at Lebanon as a very interesting laboratory, a place where hopefully a democracy can thrive. There is a lot of good efforts going in; a lot of concern, of course, about the election coming up; and if you will, the free will of the people and if Hezbollah ends up with more seats in the Parliament, what impact does this have. The government there is quick to distinguish between the Hezbollah, that is, the political participant, and the Hezbollah which, you know, creates what many of us believe is the terrorist threats in the region; and would be curious as to a couple of questions.

Number one, as I said, what would be the response the United States Government should have in the event of an election which Hezbollah wins a majority or controlling interests of the Parliament?

Number two, what is your thinking on the mandate of UNIFEL and whether it is effectively preventing the rearmament of Hezbollah in the southern area, and what can be or should be done on the part of the United Nations and the United States' efforts in that regard?

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you. Mr. McMahon.

Mr. MCMAHON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and again thank you for holding this very important hearing. We all know that after 30 years of civil war Lebanon is actively undertaking the effort to build a safe and more stable state for its citizens with the help from the United States. It is not an easy feat for Lebanon whose weak military and even weaker central government has a lot of foreign-backed groups to set up shop within its borders and drag it into wars with Israel.

Mr. Chairman, I support the notion of bolstering state institutions in Lebanon and encouraging reform through the use of foreign assistance. A stronger Lebanon should replace the current security vacuum which exists and allows for Hezbollah to thrive. But until Lebanon is in a position to productively manage this assistance and its institutions, I would like to be certain that U.S. assistance will not add to the vacuum by somehow reaching the hands of Hezbollah.

In addition to supporting Lebanon, we also have to work with our allies to diminish the role of Syria in Lebanese politics and civil society. Syria, and ultimately Iran's financial and political influence over Hezbollah is a major impediment to a normal and successful Lebanese civil society.

Lebanon is already making strides toward an active democracy with its parliamentary election in June, but as former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said, "Democracy has to deliver. People want to vote and eat." So the question is, what can be done to make the non-Hezbollah parts of the Lebanese Government be in a position to deliver? The United States must take special care to not only monitor assistance, but help Lebanon to eliminate corruption.

I look forward to our distinguished guest's testimony, and look forward to him addressing these concerns. Again, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your leadership on these issues, and I yield the remainder of my time.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you. The chair would make a unanimous request that the gentleman from California, Mr. Issa, be permitted to sit with the committee and participate as if he were a member of the committee. Seeing no objection, so ordered. Mr. Issa.

Mr. ISSA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for that unanimous consent, and thank you for the opportunity to be back on a committee that I regretfully am on leave of absence from.

In the years that I have served on the committee and the years that I have known the Ambassador, I found him to be fair, honest, and knowledgeable of the issues, first, of Israel and the Palestinians, then Lebanon in all its complexity and its mosaic of different issues, whether it is how to get Walid Jumblatt to be solidly with you, or in fact how to get the press to believe that you are pulling the strings of all the decisions made by all the elected and unelected officials in Lebanon. And if you knew how much the press loved to hate you as you wormed our way through a solution to the 2006 war as you dealt with the post-war challenges and a prime minister who would gladly have left for retirement if not for the continued support of the United States.

So I look forward to an update on where you see opportunity in the Levant. Yes, Lebanese centric would be very important, but as we all know Lebanon touches all of the tentacles, if you will, of the Middle East problems. Certainly no peace is possible without Syria, but certainly as long as Syria has an influence in Lebanon that is less than productive, no peace will happen in that country either, either for the people of Lebanon or in fact for the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who have had to call refugee camps their home for their entire lives.

So, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to this very knowledgeable ambassador who can obviously link together the challenges that Lebanon faces but also the challenges and opportunities within the region. I would ask unanimous consent to have the rest of my statement put in the record.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Without objection.

Mr. ISSA. I yield back.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Now, we could not hope to have a more expert witness than Ambassador Jeffrey D. Feltman. Ambassador Feltman, since December 18, 2008, has been the Acting Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, and has been Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary since February 11, 2008.

Before that, Ambassador Feltman served for 3 years and 9 months as the U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon. A career member of

the U.S. Foreign Service since January 1986, before his posting in Lebanon, Ambassador Feltman headed the Coalition Provisional Authority office in Irbil, and simultaneously served as deputy regional coordinator for CPA's northern area. From August 2001 until December 2003, Ambassador Feltman served as the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem, first as deputy principal officer and then from July 1, 2001 until September 2002, as acting principal officer.

In addition to a number of staff positions in Washington, Ambassador Feltman has also served in Tel Aviv, Tunisia, Hungary and Haiti.

So we are all delighted to welcome him back to this subcommittee today. Ambassador, you may proceed. Your entire statement will be made a part of the official record and you can proceed as you would.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JEFFREY D. FELTMAN, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE (FORMER UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR TO LEBANON)**

Ambassador FELTMAN. Mr. Chairman, thank you. I would like to thank you in particular for your leadership on the issue of Lebanon. I also would like to thank the entire committee for its role in supporting the concept of a free and democratic Lebanon. I would also like to thank the former members of the committee for their role in Lebanon.

President Obama and Secretary Clinton have demonstrated our continuing and unwavering support for a sovereign democratic and prosperous Lebanon, the type of Lebanon that the members of this committee have just described as being our objective. And we continue to seek full implementation of all of the U.N. Security Council resolutions on Lebanon and we will continue our efforts to strengthen the institutions of the Lebanese state. We are also seeking to advance a comprehensive regional peace. Lebanon will play a key role in the long-term effort to build lasting stability and peace in the Middle East.

Many of you have mentioned the upcoming elections. Lebanon's June 7th parliamentary elections offer an opportunity for moderate voices in Lebanon to continue their support for a sovereign, stable, independent and democratic Lebanon. It is worth noting that Lebanon alone among the Arab countries has two former Presidents who continue to live in Lebanon, two former chiefs of state who continue to live in Lebanon as a sign of the vibrancy of Lebanon's democracy.

In terms of the elections, we continue to urge all parties to support the conduct of free, fair, and transparent elections unmarred by violence. With the strong support of the U.S. Congress, the United States has provided \$10.5 million for a number of programs to help Lebanon improve its ability to carry out these fair transparent elections.

In terms of the result of these elections, the elections will hinge on a handful of seats located primarily in Christian-dominated areas of Lebanon. How the Christian voters divide between the two main political blocs—the March 14th bloc and the March 8th

bloc—will determine who has the majority in the next Parliament and the next cabinet.

Decisions on the shape and the composition of the next government that will come out of these parliamentary elections should and can be made by the Lebanese themselves, for Lebanon, free from outside interference.

In terms of our own role, we anticipate that the shape of the United States' assistance, the United States' policies toward Lebanon will be evaluated in the context of Lebanon's parliamentary election results, and especially by the policies adopted by the new cabinet.

Some of you have mentioned the threat of Hezbollah. We remain extremely concerned about the role that Hezbollah is playing in Lebanon. The group continues to receive weapons from Syria and Iran, in violation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701, the resolution that led to the cessation of hostilities in 2006. Hezbollah violent actions against fellow Lebanese citizens in May 2008 provide a fresh reminder of the threat the group poses to peace and stability.

Our position on Hezbollah remains unchanged. It was designated as a foreign terrorist organization in 1997. We see no distinction between the leadership and funding of the group's terrorist, military, political, and social wings.

We share this committee's strong support for the Special Tribunal for Lebanon which opened on March 1. We are confident that the tribunal will bring the murders of Rafiq Hariri and other Lebanese to justice. The tribunal is an independent body. It should not be politicized, and we agree, Mr. Chairman, there will be no deals at the expense of justice.

In terms of the Lebanese Armed Forces, we are encouraged the Lebanese state continues to strengthen its authority throughout the country, continues to expand its authority across all of the Lebanese territory with considerable help from Lebanon's international partners, including the Lebanon, in this regard particularly for the security services, and I want to thank again Congress for providing the resources to allow us to be a partner with the Lebanese Security Services.

Our assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces as helped it respond more quickly and effectively to isolated outbreaks of violence throughout the country, prevent additional rocket launches, and discover more arms caches in south Lebanon. Our partners in the Lebanese Armed Forces have proven highly professional and our assistance continues to be used responsibly and with exemplary end-use monitoring as noted in our regular reporting on this issue.

As noted by the chairman and by some of you, I recently traveled to Syria with Dan Shapiro, who is the Senior Director for the Middle East and North Africa at the National Security Council. As Secretary Clinton stated, as many of you have urged, we are not engaging with Syria simply for engagement sake. Our policies toward Lebanon are unshakable. We hope to use continued dialogue with Syria, in fact, to press for the need for non-interference in Lebanon, to urge progress in unimplemented parts of Security Council Resolutions 1559, 1680, and 1701, and to address other pressing regional concerns such as Iraq.

We do support Israeli and Syrian efforts to reach a peace agreement, and we also hope that Lebanon and Israel can find a mutually acceptable mechanism to address their outstanding issues, including full implementation of Security Council Resolution 1701. We are prepared to support any dialogue, any mechanism that the parties agree is acceptable. We are pleased to see, in fact, that Israel and Lebanon are already engaged indirectly through the U.N. over the situation in South Lebanon, including Ghujar, the village of Ghujar.

But to repeat what the chairman said, as we invigorate our efforts to achieve a comprehensive regional peace, no deal will be made at Lebanon's expense.

In conclusion, I would like to note that the pro-independence forces in Lebanon tell us consistently of their appreciation for the clear support they receive from Members of Congress as demonstrated by many of your visits and your statements, and from the administration. That support, which is bipartisan, must continue. Along with its other partners, the United States will continue to support the Lebanese people in their goal of a fully sovereign democratic state where the Government of Lebanon is the one exercising control over the territory of Lebanon. This is a vital goal for the Lebanese and it will help achieve peace and stability throughout the region.

Thank you for your time. It is a real honor for me to appear before you today, and I would be pleased to address your questions. [The prepared statement of Ambassador Feltman follows:]

**Jeffrey D. Feltman**  
**Acting Assistant Secretary, Near Eastern Affairs Bureau**  
**House Committee on Foreign Affairs**  
**Subcommittee on Middle East and South Asia**  
**March 24, 2009**

Thank you, Mister Chairman and other distinguished Members of the Committee for inviting me here today and providing the opportunity to discuss recent developments in Lebanon.

Since the initial days of this new administration, President Obama and Secretary Clinton have worked actively to demonstrate our continuing and unwavering support for a sovereign, democratic and prosperous Lebanon. We will continue to seek full implementation of all UN Security Council resolutions on Lebanon and remain engaged with our partners in working toward this goal. We are also continuing important efforts to strengthen the institutions of the Lebanese state and to support the Lebanese government's efforts to extend its authority throughout Lebanon. As we strive to achieve these objectives in Lebanon, we are also seeking to advance a comprehensive regional peace. The administration's dedication to this effort is evidenced by the appointment of Special Envoy George Mitchell and the Secretary's recent travel to the region. While Senator Mitchell's initial travel to the region has focused primarily on the Israeli-Palestinian track, Lebanon will play a key role in the long-term effort to build lasting stability and peace in the Middle East. So will its neighbor, Syria. Within this framework, our continuing support for the institutions of the Lebanese state and for an independent, stable Lebanon will be crucial to the future success of our efforts.

In Lebanon, the countdown has begun for the June 2009 parliamentary elections, providing a final and crucial step towards fulfilling the final steps of the pledges made in the Doha agreement, which brought to a close months of political deadlock and internal strife. The institutions of the Lebanese state have been set back in motion and the yoke of Syria's dominance over Lebanon has been cast off. Lebanon must now take ownership of its own future.

The June 7 parliamentary elections provide an opportunity to continue the process of reinforcing Lebanon's independence and work to deepen Lebanon's democratic institutions. Elections offer an opportunity for moderate voices within Lebanon to continue their support for a sovereign, stable and independent Lebanon. Decisions on the shape and composition of Lebanon's next government can and should be

made by the Lebanese themselves, for Lebanon, free from outside interference, political intimidation, and violence.

Election preparations, including security plans, are well underway. Candidate registration began on March 2, launching the formal campaign season. Political parties have begun discussions on the formation of their electoral lists, and the March 14 coalition recently launched its formal electoral platform. The March 2 National Dialogue communiqué in which participants called for all parties to refrain from violence, create a positive atmosphere for the conduct of elections, and speed the formation of the Constitutional Council, is a positive development.

Interior Minister Ziad Baroud is developing a master plan for donor nations that wish to provide assistance for the 2009 elections. The U.S. will support that effort, including support for election monitors. In the last several years, the U.S. has provided some \$10.5 million for a number of programs to help Lebanon improve its ability to carry out fair, transparent elections and improve the functioning of its democracy. The EU, European and Arab countries also are expected to send election observation missions, which will play an important role in deterring the use of political violence during the elections.

The political scene in Lebanon remains largely divided between the pro-independence March 14 bloc, and the March 8 bloc whose coalition is closely aligned with Syria and Hizballah. Most observers anticipate the election results will hinge on a handful of seats, located primarily in Christian-dominated areas of Lebanon. How these Christian voters divide along March 14 or March 8 lines will determine who has the majority in the next parliament and the next cabinet.

The composition of the next government to be formed after the June election is, of course, an issue for the Lebanese alone to decide. It is important that the U.S. and other members of the international community support the holding of elections as scheduled, free of any violence and intimidation, and without any attempts to disrupt the proper functioning of government institutions until the new government is formed. We anticipate that the shape of the United States' assistance programs in Lebanon will be evaluated in the context of Lebanon's parliamentary election results and the policies formed by the new cabinet.

We remained extremely concerned about the role Hizballah is playing in Lebanon. The group continues to receive weapons from Syria and Iran in violation of Security Council resolution 1701. Additionally, Hizballah's violent actions against fellow Lebanese citizens in May 2008 have given many Lebanese a fresh reminder

of the threat the group poses to peace and stability. The group's bellicose rhetoric during the Gaza crisis in January 2009 was yet another example of a violent agenda that most Lebanese have come to reject. Hizballah clearly remains a danger to Lebanon and the region.

Within Lebanon, Hizballah and its allies continue to monopolize the political and religious expression of Lebanese Shia, spuriously asserting that they are the sole voice of Lebanon's Shia community. However, we are convinced that Shia interests in Lebanon can be represented successfully by moderate voices, rather than those of terrorist organizations.

The United Kingdom recently announced it had begun contacts with the political wing of Hizballah, leading many to ask whether the United States was considering a similar shift in policy. The answer is, emphatically, no. Our position on Hizballah remains as it was when the group was first designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization in 1997. We see no distinction between the leadership and funding of the group's terrorist, military, political, and social wings. Nor does Hizballah. Spokesman Hassan Izzeddine recently affirmed that "Hizballah cannot be split into a military and political wing." Our longstanding policy remains in effect: should Hizballah renounce terrorism—both in Lebanon and abroad—and submit to the rule of law and the authority of the Lebanese state, we would reconsider this status.

The Special Tribunal for Lebanon opened on March 1. The Tribunal represents the hope of Lebanon and the international community for an end to an era of impunity for political assassinations. Prosecutor Daniel Bellemare has cautioned that it will take time to issue indictments. We are confident that the Tribunal will bring the murderers of Rafiq Hariri and other Lebanese to justice. Our support for the Tribunal is strong and will continue. We recently pledged to increase our assistance to the Tribunal by \$6 million, pending Congressional approval, bringing our total pledge to \$20 million. Let me state clearly that the Tribunal cannot be traded away or shackled as part of a regional political deal. The Tribunal is an independent body staffed by professionals committed to the impartial pursuit of justice based on the evidence uncovered during the investigative phase of the Tribunal's work. The Tribunal should not be politicized. There will be no deals at the expense of justice.

We are encouraged that the Lebanese state continues to strengthen its authority throughout the country, with considerable help from the United States, particularly for the security services. Our assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) has

helped it respond more quickly and effectively to isolated outbreaks of violence throughout the country, prevent additional rocket launches, and discover more arms caches in south Lebanon. Our partners in the LAF have proven highly professional, and our assistance continues to be used responsibly with an exemplary end-use record, as noted in our regular and rigorous monitoring. Our relationship with the LAF is growing ever stronger, as evidenced by the recent visit to Washington of LAF Commander General Jean Kahwaji—the first ever by an LAF commander to the United States. While in Washington, General Kahwaji reaffirmed his strong commitment, which he and other senior officials of the Lebanese government have publicly stated on numerous occasions, to Security Council resolution 1701. That resolution includes a call for a durable ceasefire with Israel and for combating terrorism in Lebanon. With the decision to hold parliamentary elections in a single day, both the LAF and Internal Security Forces will make use of the help they have received to deploy throughout Lebanon, deter violence, and ensure that Lebanese are able to vote freely, fairly, and without fear.

I recently traveled to Lebanon and Syria with Dan Shapiro, Senior Director for the Middle East and North Africa at the National Security Council. In Damascus, we affirmed that Lebanese elections should proceed without interference, and that the Lebanese should be allowed to determine the shape of their next government. We also raised a number of other Lebanon-related concerns, including unimplemented provisions of Security Council resolutions 1559, 1680, and 1701, which call *inter alia* for delineation of the Lebanon-Syria border, an exchange of ambassadors, and disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon. We hope to use continued dialogue with Syria to press these and other regional concerns and were very clear that our diplomacy will be results oriented. As Secretary Clinton has stated, we are not engaging for engagement's sake, but to advance the interests of the United States and our allies.

While we support Israeli and Syrian efforts to reach a peace agreement, we also hope that Lebanon and Israel can find a mutually acceptable mechanism to address their outstanding issues. Both governments regularly profess support for Security Council resolution 1701, though its full implementation requires further work and dialogue by both countries. Some in Lebanon have called publicly for the government of Lebanon to begin talks with Israel under the framework of resolution 1701. In its recently unveiled political platform, March 14 stressed the importance of full implementation of 1701 as a means of achieving Lebanon's independence, stability, and prosperity, and putting it in "harmony" with the international community. We are prepared to support any such dialogue, and are pleased to see Israel and Lebanon already engaged, through the UN, over northern

Ghajar. We look forward to this issue's resolution as a demonstration that diplomacy, rather than Hizballah's weapons, can best secure Lebanon's interests. As we reinvigorate our efforts to achieve a comprehensive regional peace, no deal will be made at Lebanon's expense.

Pro-independence forces in Lebanon tell us consistently of their appreciation for the clear support they receive from members of Congress and the administration. That support must continue. The United States will continue to voice its commitment to support the Lebanese people in their goal of a fully sovereign democratic state as outlined in UNSCRs 1559, 1680, and 1701. This goal is not only vital to Lebanon itself, but also to the achievement of peace and stability throughout the region.

Thank you for your time. I would be pleased to address your questions.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you, Ambassador, one of the issues that has provoked Syrian threats against Lebanon in the past has been the posting of international forces along the border of the two countries. At the same time we know by independent means that Syria continues to arm Hezbollah across its frontier with Lebanon, contrary to the mandate of the Security Council.

The question is, what can the United States and what can the international community do to stop the flow of arms and to get Damascus to accept the delineation of the Lebanese/Syrian border?

Ambassador FELTMAN. Mr. Chairman, you have touched on one of the biggest challenges we face in trying to support the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1701 that basically called for an end to all arms shipments to any group except for the Government of Lebanon.

Those arms coming from Iran are also, of course, a violation of other Security Council Resolutions such as 1748 that prohibits Iran from shipping weapons. These weapons not only have a destabilizing effect in the region but they endanger Lebanon itself. It is our firm belief, and we have had an ongoing dialogue with the Government of Lebanon about how to address this problem.

It is not just the United States that is concerned. It is all of Lebanon's international partners. In fact, many of Lebanon's international partners came together in two ways: One was to support a Lebanon border assessment team, Lebanon international border assessment team from the United Nations that went out twice to study the problem you describe, and to identify possible fixes to this. The second thing that we did internationally was we came together to set up a model program for integrating Lebanon's security services, providing them support, technical assistance in order to build a border patrol regime starting on the north. That effort is still underway. But the big concern is to the east.

We would urge that the problem begin to be addressed, first of all, by Iran and Syria complying with their obligations under the Security Council Resolutions, not to permit arms transfers to unauthorized groups in Lebanon, but second, to do the border demarcations you mentioned. To control the border you need to know where that border is. The Lebanese have stated their willingness to start that border demarcation immediately. They have reactivated their side of a joint border control. We would hope that Syria would respond in reactivating its side of the border control. I assure you this is one of the issues that we discussed when we visited Damascus a few weeks ago because this is a very, very serious concern and a real deficiency in the implementation of 1701.

Mr. ACKERMAN. In mid-March, President Bashar Assad gave an interview in which he issued veiled threats against Lebanon should the Hariri tribunal reach the supposedly wrong conclusions, or should the March 14th coalition win the elections and actually attempt to govern as a democratic majority.

Questions: Do you believe that violence remains a part of Syria's strategy for dealing with Lebanon? What can we do to put the Syrian regime on notice that interference with Lebanon's elections will have consequences? Is it a good idea to tell them now what those consequences would be, and do we even know what those consequences are?

Ambassador FELTMAN. You know, our concerns with Syria, we have very, very serious concerns with Syrian behavior, and Lebanon is one area of those concerns. When Dan Shapiro and I went to Damascus, Lebanon, of course, is one of the issues we discussed.

Although one doesn't normally talk about what happens in diplomatic channels, I will take the liberty to say that Foreign Minister Walid Moallem, Presidential Advisor Bethena Shaban, Deputy Foreign Minister Facil McDudd, assured us that Syria shares our goal for elections in Lebanon that are free and fair, where the Lebanese people are able to choose their own representatives in Parliament away from intimidation and violence. Those were words, those were a statement, but they were said in a very important official bilateral dialogue.

All of us are very aware of problems in Lebanon as the date for elections approach.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Let me just say that my time is up. The witness will be allowed to finish the answer, and I am trying to set a pattern. Please continue then.

Ambassador FELTMAN. All of us are very aware of problems that have occurred in Lebanon in the past as elections approach. In fact, if you remember, the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri happened just a few months before the scheduled 2005 legislative elections. All of us are watching this very, very closely.

I will not speculate now on what the consequences would be of violence in Lebanon, but I am sure there would be an international reaction should these elections be marred in the same way that there was an international reaction in 2005.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Rohrabacher.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Again, I am going to start off with this observation because it is something we forget, but it does not negate the fact of how tough

we need to be, and that is, Syria did play a positive role years ago in helping end the conflagration that was causing so much bloodshed and seemed so out of control at that time. I remember that very well. And when dealing with the Syrians, I think that we need to, if we are going to make a deal with these guys that will protect Lebanon, we have got to make sure that they understand that we are not forgetting that, because that is something that is quite often they have a right to be proud of, that they helped stop that bloodshed and turmoil.

Of course, since then their role degenerated into a very negative role in Lebanon, and I just would like to ask you this.

We were talking about what we expect, we expect the border to be controlled and such, what can we offer the Syrians that will be—is there a quid pro quo that we can offer them? The fact that they say they want to have free elections in Lebanon, quite frankly, coming from the government that does not permit free elections in their country, that does not hold much weight with me. What quid pro quo can we offer the Syrians in order to bring peace to Lebanon?

Ambassador FELTMAN. Congressman, if I can comment first on a more general part, noting how you opened your question, framing it and reminding us of the Syria role and helping to end Lebanon's tragic civil war.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Right.

Ambassador FELTMAN. I think all of us would welcome very positive ties between Syria and Lebanon. It is natural that these two neighbors should have very strong bilateral ties. There are economic reasons for doing so, there are family reasons, you know, people going back and forth. There are lots of historic reasons, cultural reasons. All of us would like to see very, very positive Syrian/Lebanese relations, relations that are based on the idea of mutual respect; relations that are based on diplomatic recognition which now has in fact occurred, and I think all of us were pleased to learn that the Syrians have now sent the request for Agri Mahon for the very first Syrian Ambassador to ever be posted in Lebanon. This is all good news.

To the extent that you have normal relations between Syria and Lebanon, that is great, and Syria will have influence in Lebanon through the economy, through the family ties, through history. You know, we are not saying no Syrian interference, no Syrian influence in Lebanon. We are saying let it be a natural positive influence the way that the United States-Canadian relationship works.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. You know, Mr. Ambassador, that is a very good point, and I think it is important for us to make sure that we assure, reassure the Syrians that if there is a regional peace, they will prosper.

Ambassador FELTMAN. Yes.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. And they will be part of that, and our goal, of course, is not to put Syria down; our goal is to bring a regional peace and bring about an environment where you can have democratic government. Perhaps they could have democratic government in Syria as well, I might add. So are you optimistic that that message can get through? Because I have heard that there is move-

ment going on, we have all heard these rumors, is there movement going on toward that direction in—

Ambassador FELTMAN. Toward democracy?

Mr. ROHRABACHER. No, no, toward Syria actually being willing to make the agreements, for example, the Golan Heights and the agreements about Lebanon that will bring about a regional peace.

Ambassador FELTMAN. Well, you know, there were four rounds of indirect talks between Syria and Israel that took place over the course of the past year. They were brokered by Turkey. This is a positive sign of both Syria and Israel wanting to explore with each other how to get to a Syria-Israel track that is viable.

The President and the Secretary, I think, Congress, would like to see a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. That has been a bipartisan policy for many, many administrations. So to the extent that you can get a Syria-Israel track going, not at Lebanon's expense, I think that is all positive. I think that is what the Syrians are looking for us to help broker.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. We need to be very tough on one side and very open-handed on the other, and I would hope, and Mr. Ambassador, I want to congratulate you and thank you for what you personally have done and used your influence to try to see that there are positive changes in that region. You have dedicated your life to these things, and those of us—that has not escaped us here in Congress.

Ambassador FELTMAN. Thank you.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. So thank you very much.

Ambassador FELTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Rohrabacher.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Ellison.

Mr. ELLISON. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

Regarding Hezbollah, what concrete steps do you think the Lebanese leaders can take internally to help promote disarmament of Hezbollah?

Ambassador FELTMAN. I think the question of Hezbollah actually requires larger thinking than simply inside Lebanon. I think the Lebanese have a responsibility, but it also requires the international community and regional partners to work together.

The goal, I think, should be that all parties in Lebanon compete democratically through elections, through normal means, and that you do not have one party that is able to change the equation by threatening its arms or intimidating others because people know they have these kinds of arms.

The Lebanese Government has taken some important steps since 2006, such as redeploying the Lebanese Armed Forces to the south. For the first time since the late sixties the Lebanese Armed Forces are present on Lebanon's south border, and if you look at the number of incidents, security incidents between Lebanon and Syria, they are at their lowest level from 2006 until now compared to the period from 2000, Israel's withdrawn from south Lebanon until the war in 2006.

The Lebanese have also committed themselves to a national dialogue process to discuss how to best defend Lebanon, how to build up the Lebanese institutions that can provide for Lebanese security. I do not think there is an easy answer from today until tomor-

row. It also requires work on the part of Syria and responsible behavior on the part of the Iran.

I am optimistic that we are headed in the right direction. The biggest enemy to Hezbollah's arms is a strong, viable, responsible, accountable Lebanese state, and I think that is what the international partners are trying to do in helping the Lebanese establish.

Mr. ELLISON. Thank you. In that same regard, strengthening cities and rural areas outside of Beirut center is an important task to reducing popular support of armed militias operating outside the mandate of the central government, such as Hezbollah and other extremist organizations. How can the Lebanese Government continue to strengthen cities and rural Lebanon so that they can have their own free-standing, strong institutions?

Ambassador FELTMAN. It is an excellent question. You have pointed out something that not only gives Hezbollah strength, but also allows other sort of more traditional leaders or other groups to get loyalty of constituencies at the expense of government institutions.

I mean, I think what the international community is trying to do in response to requests from Lebanese officials, Lebanese members of Parliament, Lebanese civil society leaders, is help strengthen government institutions at the national level all the way down to the local level so that they are transparent, they are accountable, they are responsible so that the Lebanese feel that if they need protection their state can protect them.

If they need water supply, utilities, they can go to their municipal officials and get them. They do not have to go to tribal leaders, to communal leaders. They can rely on the government.

All of us are trying to help the Lebanese build the state institutions, the municipal institutions, that a democracy requires to thrive, and I do think we have made some progress there. With the support of Congress, we have some very good programs working with municipal government to make them more transparent, to do constituent outreach so that the local citizens can see what they are doing. We are working on improved water resources in the south in a way that the constituents can see that their government is delivering. These are the sorts of activities that I believe the international community is right to support with the Government of Lebanon, and I am very proud that we as the United States have been participating in this effort.

Mr. ELLISON. And with my remaining seconds, Mr. Ambassador, you know, there is recently a report in the news about two Palestinian leaders who were killed in Lebanon. What can you tell us about that? What are the dynamics there, and what was at play?

Ambassador FELTMAN. I can comment on one. I am not familiar with the second, but one that was killed was the second ranking PLO official in Lebanon, a guy named Kamel Medhat. He was known for his moderation of trying to negotiate between Palestinian factions in these Palestine refugee camps. He was PLO, he was Fatah, so he was sort of mainstream Palestinian trying to bring others on board to prevent violence from occurring in these Palestinian refugee camps, or worse, violence from spreading from the refugee camps outward, and I can only think that whoever de-

cided to murder him using an explosive-laden car, like so many other assassinations in Lebanon, did not have the best interests of Lebanon or the Palestinian refugee camps at heart because he was—as I said, he was the one that was trying to find nonviolent ways to address Palestinian concerns.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you. Mr. Burton in person.

Mr. BURTON. In person. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is nice being with you.

I have been very concerned about Syria for a long, long time because they appear to be the conduit for weapons coming in from Iran into Hezbollah and Hamas, and Hamas's headquarters is in, I believe, Damascus.

What, if anything, can we do to convince Syria to become a member of the nations of the world who believe in freedom and democracy, and to stop this support for Hezbollah and Hamas? And what can we do to get them to change their policies toward Israel? If you can give me the answer to that, it is like cutting the Gordian Knot, but I would just like to hear your opinion. Tough question, huh?

Ambassador FELTMAN. It is a tough question, and if you look at Syria in behavior in some ways they have tried to have it both ways, because they have in fact engaged on these indirect talks with Israel over the past year. Israel and Syria via Turkey had four rounds of indirect talks where they went into quite some detail about how they might move forward toward a peace agreement between the two, and I am sure that security issues like Hezbollah and Hamas were among the issues that were discussed in these indirect talks.

So on the one hand Syria has been willing to show that it will engage at least indirectly with the Israelis, and, in fact, President Assad has referred that he is even willing to do this directly at some point. On the other hand they are, in fact, the conduit for the armed shipments to Hezbollah, and also host the Hamas political leaders who have been clear in their rejection of the conditions that would lead the Palestinian reconciliation, the condition that would lead to real Israeli-Palestinian peace. So I agree with you, they are playing a double role right now.

One of the reasons why the President and the Secretary asked Dan Shapiro and me to go to Damascus was to start talking about moving on the positive side, moving away from the less constructive behavior that they have been engaging in. It was one round of talks. I cannot say that we have found the secret to untangling this Gordian Knot after one 4-hour meeting, but nevertheless it was in the spirit of your question that the President asked us to go.

Mr. BURTON. The President has indicated he would like to talk to the leaders of almost all of the Middle Eastern countries, in particular, Iran and Syria. What do you think should be the preconditions before the President does that?

He gave a speech, I think, last week almost directly to the people in Iran, and he was rebuked by, I think, one of their cleric leaders, the Ayatollah Khomeini, the Supreme Leader of Iran. He said that Obama has insulted the Islamic Republic of Iran from the first day. So this was after President Obama made those overtures to the Iranian people.

What do you think that this country and this administration should do to try to open a dialogue, if they should, and what should the conditions be not only for Iran but also Syria?

Ambassador FELTMAN. Well, I do not believe that engagement is soft. I do not believe that talking has to be a sign of weakness. Talking is one tool.

In terms of Iran and Syria—

Mr. BURTON. Let me just interrupt you a little bit.

Ambassador FELTMAN. Yes.

Mr. BURTON. There is a number of people in the Congress, myself included, that believe unless the conditions are very, very stringent that talking to Iran is a sign of weakness to them, and that they are going to gain from just the very fact that the talks are taking place. So what I am trying to figure out is what should be the parameters and why should we be talking to them until there is something to talk about?

Ambassador FELTMAN. I think that the Supreme Leader's reaction that you quoted indicates that they are not looking at talking as a sign of weakness on our part. The fact that he has to make some critical comments about what was a New Year's greeting indicates that they are a little off balance by this.

I would advocate that we—

Mr. BURTON. Let me just, because my time has run out, I do not agree with that assessment at all. I think that they are very recalcitrant, and I think they see a discussion with any of our leaders without very strong preconditions that deal with the problems in the Middle East would be a sign of weakness and it will be an encouragement to them.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you. Mr. Carnahan.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome, Ambassador. It is great to have you here. I wanted to just start with a comment and really see the time is a great opportunity to re-engage. I think like many of my colleagues and many Lebanese-Americans that I represent, you know, we hope to see a rebirth in the post-civil war Lebanon. So it is great to have you here.

In terms of what we can do to strengthen the consensus government and Lebanese institutions, two in particular that I wanted I wanted to ask about, and one is, first, the Lebanese Armed Forces. You were here back in July of last year before the committee. You noted that the expansions of U.S. assistance to the LAF was to make long-term investment in the state of Lebanon, the security of the state in the national institution that enjoys almost universal respect among the Lebanese.

Can you tell us today if we have seen any improvement in the LAF performance since you were before us last year, and in terms of how we should support that going forward?

Ambassador FELTMAN. Thank you. Thank you, Congressman Carnahan.

The reaction of the Lebanese Armed Forces during the events in Gaza in January I think was illustrative. There was incredible pressure throughout the Middle East on moderate governments by what was happening in Gaza. You may remember hearing more radicals trying to attack moderate leaders and saying, now wait a

minute, we should be part of this fight. We should be siding with the Palestinians who are under seize in Gaza. We should be getting involved.

Of course, moderate leaders in the Arab world realized that, no, what in fact we needed to do was to try to get back to a cease fire and get back onto a viable peace process, but there were elements trying to rile the street in a different direction.

This pressure, of course, was felt in Lebanon where there are 400,000 Palestinian refugees living in camps in Lebanon. There were, in fact, it was two or three, I believe it was three rockets fired from south Lebanon into Israel during the Gaza crisis. This risked putting Lebanon and Israel at war again.

The Lebanese Armed Forces, working with UNIFEL, immediately stepped up their patrols. They immediately issued statements along with the Lebanese President, the Lebanese cabinet, unanimously on the part of the Lebanese cabinet, showing their support for 1701, their commitment to the Resolution 1701 that provided for security and stability in south Lebanon. There were no further rocket attacks in south Lebanon.

This is one example of the Lebanese Armed Forces stepping up to its responsibility to secure the south Lebanon border where the Lebanese Army had been absent from the late sixties all the way up until the fall of 2006.

There is a long way to go, but I repeat what I said back almost a year ago, which is, the Lebanese Armed Forces is the national institution in Lebanon that everyone takes pride in. There is not a Shii unit, a Maranite brigade. This is a cross confessional organization that every family, every community is part of.

Mr. CARNAHAN. If I could, I want to cut you off because I have one more institution that I want to ask about.

Ambassador FELTMAN. Yes.

Mr. CARNAHAN. And that is the American University in Beirut, in terms of opportunities there to use that institution going forward in terms of better repairing them for success.

Ambassador FELTMAN. I have tremendous success for the American University of Beirut. You know, it is one of the outstanding institutions of education in the Middle East, and it is something I think that we can all be proud of from the legacy of American benevolence from the Nineteenth Century.

I had the opportunity last night, in fact, to meet the new president, new for me, he has been in the office a few months, but the new president of the American University of Beirut, and the U.S. Congress has been extremely generous in supporting the American University of Beirut over the years, and I expect that support will continue.

But we work with the American University of Beirut in a variety of ways, but we also have to keep a little bit of a hands-off role from AUB because it is a private institution. It is not part of the U.S. Government. So we support AUB while also letting AUB thrive as an independent academic institution.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Issa.

Mr. ISSA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador, a lot of subjects to go through, and I will try to be quick and brief, but let me start in reverse order with AUB. Historically, AUB has had a total support in the words of the United States both at the administration level and at Congress's level, but they have often had to be ear-marked, a word that has become a little distasteful. Do you expect this administration to provide funding without separate ear-marks from the Congress for AUB?

Ambassador FELTMAN. I would expect that we would have consistent support for AUB. It is in our interest to see that institution thrive.

Mr. ISSA. I appreciate that. I am glad to hear it.

The history of military equipment, and it is leading question, but I hope you will appreciate in the vein that it is given, is when I go to Lebanon and I see M-113s that were from before I started in the army in the 1970s. Is it relatively true or completely true that no major piece of equipment has ever been lost by the Lebanese Armed Forces through all these years that was entrusted to them through our aid programs?

Ambassador FELTMAN. You are asking me easy questions, Congressman, but it is true. The Lebanese Armed Forces has one of the best track records in the world for this. Our end-use monitoring has revealed no deficiencies.

Mr. ISSA. Excellent, and I appreciate that because we do have some portion of that \$1 billion still backed up and not yet delivered to them.

Probably one more softball, and that is, is there a win-win in your opinion dealing with the Latani and the Hezbani River to try to bring water to the south while at the same time allowing more water to flow into Israel if we are able to eventually engage in those projects in some construction way? I know that has always been a "can we go that far south" question.

Ambassador FELTMAN. This is far from a softball question, Congressman.

Mr. ISSA. Water never is easy even in Southern California.

Ambassador FELTMAN. Yes, we had a program with the Latani Water Authority several years back that we have now recently reinvigorated. It is extremely important for all the regions of the Middle East, but particularly in that part of Lebanon to utilize the resources that are available to their fullest extent. We are looking at waste water treatment, waste water reuse. We are taking a comprehensive approach of how to better utilize the resources available in south Lebanon, but it is about Lebanon. This is part of our program for Lebanon.

What we are doing is to help provide resources, better use of resources inside Lebanon is what our—

Mr. ISSA. No, and I appreciate. I only brought up the question of Israel because there was some threat of bombing a pumping plant some years ago based on Israel's belief that Speaker Berry had funded a project that might be denying them some water, and that sensitivity, I think, hit the press.

During the 2006 war and also during the run-up to the election or determination and election of the President, there was an attempt by a number of groups to sort of tear at the fabric of Lebanese society, and certainly to us on the outside it appeared to fail.

Can you confirm that in fact all these attempts to tear apart the Lebanese and put them back into civil war have consistently failed?

This is mostly a question of are they durable running up to the parliamentary elections?

Ambassador FELTMAN. It is worth going back to that spring of 2005, or February 2005. The most powerful political figure in Lebanon was assassinated. The strongest Sunni leader in Lebanon was assassinated. The most renowned figure on the international stage in Lebanon was assassinated when Rafiq Hariri was killed on February 14th.

I expect that whoever did that thought that it would scare the Lebanese, perhaps send them into civil war, but it would derail the elections that would come up. What happened instead, the Lebanese people pulled together, the international community pulled together and in fact the Syrians had to leave Lebanon at the end of April, and there were free and fair elections at the end of May and June of that year.

I think the Lebanese people have pulled together repeatedly. There have been security breaches. There have been other assassinations. There have been murders of followers of certain political leaders, and every time this has happened, with the exception of May last year, May last year was an exception, but all these security incidents have not in fact led to broader civil war. They have lead to the Lebanese stepping back and saying, now wait a minute, let us solve our differences through democratic means, not through violence.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Chairman, if I could have your indulgence just for one quick follow-up question.

Mr. ACKERMAN. We will allow that in a moment—

Mr. ISSA. Of course.

Mr. ACKERMAN [continuing]. If I get a positive response from the Ambassador.

Mr. ISSA. Yes.

Mr. ACKERMAN. We have each had our turn. Your appearance was highly heralded and you did not disappoint. If you would agree, I would go one more round, of one question each, with the members of our panel, and if my colleagues will indulge Mr. Issa, I will let him take his question with his follow up.

Ambassador FELTMAN. That is fine.

Mr. ISSA. Thank you all. Mr. Ambassador, cluster bombs from the 2006 war, an estimated 1 million of them that some portion of them are still are in the south, mostly in the south of Lebanon and serve as sort of bad examples of land mines because they are not designed to go off or not go off at a particular time. Can you give us a progress report, and two other portions to it; not only how well are we doing but what effect is it having, and what do you think more that Congress should do to deal with the residue of that war?

Ambassador FELTMAN. As, of course, you know I was in Lebanon during that war and for the first, I guess, 18 months after that war, and it was tragic to witness the civilian casualties during the war and that continued on after the war.

I am glad that we have been able to respond with the support of the congressional appropriations. We have so far provided over \$15 million, \$15.5 million or something for the clean up of what

they call ERW, the explosive residue of war, and \$13 million of that has gone directly to the mine advisory group to actually do the clean up.

But I think a more important part of it is \$2.5 million that has gone to the Lebanese Mine Action Center because this is about building capacity for the Lebanese because, unfortunately, the mines and the cluster bombs were not only from that 2006 war, which we are addressing systematically, but there is also all sorts of unmarked mines remaining from the civil war, and so by building up the capacity of the Lebanese themselves to clean it we hope we can keep the effort beyond just the south and the 2006 war.

The other thing, of course, is we have always encouraged the Israelis to share all their strike data with the U.N. The Israelis have told us that they have shared strike data on two occasions, including the data that they provided to their own troops when they were withdrawing in 2006.

I took note in the Secretary General's most recent report on Lebanon, his most recent 1701 report, that there is a reference to the possibility of Israel providing more strike data. I do not have any way to confirm that now, but it would be encouraging if it is true.

In terms of the actual clean up and progress report, much of the south has been clean, but there is still additional discoveries of cluster munitions, so it still does provide a danger.

Mr. ISSA. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you.

Ambassador, Hezbollah and Syria have said that regardless of who wins the election in June, that Lebanon should have a government of national unity; one wherein the minority possesses a blocking third. In other words, the ability as they have now to veto all major government initiatives.

The ruling March 14th Coalition was compelled in May 2008 to accept this condition, but does not presently seem to have a cohesive position on that issue. The majority leader Saad Hariri has announced that his Future Movement would not participate in a Hezbollah-led government, but leaders of the other parties have indicated that they are nonetheless open to the idea.

My question: Does the Obama administration have an opinion or a position on this question?

Ambassador FELTMAN. Mr. Chairman, if you will indulge me, I will give what I think is—I will give you the position, but I would also like to offer a personal observation on this.

Mr. ACKERMAN. We would appreciate that.

Ambassador FELTMAN. The position is that the Syrians should not be talking about this; that none of us should be talking about this; that this is what the Lebanese should be deciding. Our whole policy has been bipartisan. Congress and the administration for the past several years has been the Lebanese need to decide what is best for Lebanon.

We have worked to create the atmosphere internationally in which the Lebanese have the space to maneuver, the room to maneuver to make these decisions for themselves.

So, first and foremost, it is a decision for the Lebanese to make. Whatever they—

Mr. ACKERMAN. That is assuming they have the space.

Ambassador FELTMAN. Yes, and it is important for us to keep the space by emphasizing and finding ways to keep that space open.

My personal observation is that for those who advocate this national unity-type government that you describe that exists now, I would hope they would be telling their friends that are in the Government of Lebanon now to make this government work. If people believe that this is an ideal solution for Lebanon, it does not seem to be operating ideally in practice because the idea of having consensus for all government decisions has led in what is my personal view to many, many blockages in the work of the government.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you. Mr. Rohrabacher, for one question. No semi-colons, complex clauses or Part B. [Laughter.]

Mr. ROHRABACHER. So we have determined that it would be, in the last round, that we would be well served by trying to convince, if we could, Syria to serve their own interest by becoming a very positive player than a negative player, in the long run that would serve—there is your carrot, okay? Now I am going to ask you about sticks, because I have noted that sometimes when you are dealing with tough guys, rather than democratic leaders, which is what we are dealing with in Syria, the tough guys sometimes only understand the sticks, and the fact that you are willing to use them.

My read from their testimony is that we have gone Iran in a relationship with Syria, which has a relationship with Hezbollah and Hamas, which is a negative influence in Lebanon and in fact Syria has a direct negative influence in Lebanon.

So what are the sticks that we can use—first of all, Syria is a poor country, it does not have water and power sufficient, so it is a very relatively vulnerable country that way, what sticks would you suggest that we use if they are not convinced out of positive arguments please join the family of nations so we can all prosper and live at peace and there will be harmony in this area, that they are not swayed by that, what sticks can we use to pry Iran and Syria apart because obviously being a poor country Syria depends on Iran, and then how can we make sure that we pry apart Hezbollah and Hamas from Syria, and what sticks would we use to accomplish that?

Ambassador FELTMAN. You know, I do not believe that many countries would envy being in the position Syria is in right now. Syria's best friend is Iran. Who are Iran's friends? Nobody seems to trust Iran in the region or globally. There are people who deal with Iran, but there is a lot of distrust based on Iranian misbehavior domestically, regionally, internationally.

You know, there are a number of sanctions, designations that Syria belabors under now that Iran also is under. Syria is designated as a state sponsor of terrorism. These are fairly significant measures that are existing in the relationship with Syria now.

I do not know if we will succeed in convincing Syria by words that it is worth changing direction, looking at different things. But I also do not think it is a sign of weakness to try. The Syria-Israel track that the Turks were promoting is a very intriguing, is a very intriguing one. We have long said we want a comprehensive peace in the region. That means peace between Israel and all of its neighbors. I do not believe you can get to a peace between Israel and

Syria as long as you have Syria giving the sort of support to Hezbollah and Hamas that it is giving now.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I take it you do not have any sticks from what you are saying.

Ambassador FELTMAN. I am not using that language, but I would say look at the—look at the context in which the relationship with Syria is operating now.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Let me give you one thing and then I will—

Mr. ACKERMAN. We are trying not to go into—

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Just one last thing.

Mr. ACKERMAN. You are doing good.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. [Laughter.]

How about if the non-democratic Government of Syria continues to be playing a negative role rather than coming over and joining us and trying to play a positive role, how about if we support people who want to overthrow the Government of Syria?

You know, maybe they might be willing to compromise more if we were willing to put that kind of pressure on them, the same with the mullahs in Iran. I am not talking about invading their country. I am talking about supporting the democratic elements within those countries.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I had a no-hitter going, and you threw a spitball.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I will just leave it with that. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you. Mr. Burton.

Mr. BURTON. I want you, Mr. Chairman, to define what one question is one of these days. [Laughter.]

That sounded like to me it was a small book. Anyhow, I do not mind. I thought they were good questions. I do have one question.

You know, if we are talking about our leadership on this committee, or the White House, or the leaders like yourself or people in the State Department, if we believe that the leadership should talk to Syria about them becoming a non-terrorist state and becoming a member of the family of nations and helping solve the problems not only with Syria, but Lebanon as well, should we not prior to any kind of discussions, talks or meetings request, require that Hezbollah and Hamas be removed from Syria as not only irritants but a problem for the entire Middle East and particularly Israel, and also since Syria wants us to facilitate Israel giving the Golan Heights back, should not all those things be part of some kind of agreement before we have talks of a high level?

Ambassador FELTMAN. Congressman Burton, let me be clear. Our policy is that Syria should stop supporting Hezbollah, Syria should stop facilitating arms and financial transfers—

Mr. BURTON. But that has not in any way slowed down the movement toward talking with Syria. I mean, we have had a, and I am not criticizing my colleagues, but a number of my colleagues have gone over there from this committee and others to meet with Assad, and there was pretty much with no preconditions. So what I am saying is should there not be something pretty well understood before they make these high-level talks, in particular, with the President, before any of that takes place?

Ambassador FELTMAN. The approach the administration is taking right now is to see if we can use talks along with the other tools we have to try to get to the same policy goals. We share the same policy goals you describe. Syria should stop supporting Hamas and Hezbollah. Syria should play a constructive role in the region.

We have a number of tools at our disposal, diplomacy is one of them. Talking is one of them. It is not a tool of softness or of weakness. It is a way to see if we can use a different tactical approach to achieve the same goals.

One of the reasons, in fact, my own trip to Damascus went the way it did was to be able to demonstrate that our underlying policies are not changing just because we are talking to Syria. I went to Beirut first. I wanted to see a number of Lebanese leaders to talk to them not only about Lebanese elections, things we have talked about today, but also to talk to them about our discussions with Syria; what we were trying to achieve. We were not going to make a deal at Lebanon's expense. We were not going to let Syria off the hook for Hezbollah.

I then went to Damascus with Mr. Shapiro. Then returned to Beirut to show again that even though tactically we are employing a different tool than we may have employed a year or 2 ago, that the basic policy goals of supporting a Lebanese state, of supporting a Palestine reconciliation, that under the Cortex principles, that trying to stop the arms to Hezbollah, these policy goals remain the same.

Mr. BURTON. Mr. Chairman, let me just say this; that my wife is from that part of the world, and I would like to go to Lebanon and Syria, and I know she would, her family is over there, and if we can ever reach some kind of an agreement on the preconditions for these discussions so that the United States will not look or appear to be weak and caving in, then I will be one of the guys that will be wanting to go, but at the present time I still feel, Mr. Chairman, that those preconditions have not yet been met and we should not be doing anything until they are.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Burton.

Ambassador, thank you for agreeing to be our witness here today and appearing without any preconditions. [Laughter.]

We thank you for your service, your major contribution to our discussion, and for your continuing service to our country.

Ambassador FELTMAN. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 3:32 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

# A P P E N D I X



MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

**SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE**  
**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
*U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*  
*WASHINGTON, D.C.*

**Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia**  
**Gary L. Ackerman (D-NY), Chairman**

March 17, 2009

**TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia to be held in **Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building**:

**DATE:** Tuesday, March 24, 2009  
**TIME:** 2:00 p.m.  
**SUBJECT:** Update on Lebanon  
**WITNESS:** The Honorable Jeffrey D. Feltman  
Acting Assistant Secretary  
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs  
U.S. Department of State  
*(Former United States Ambassador to Lebanon)*

**By Direction of the Chairman**

*The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.*

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### COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON The Middle East and South Asia MEETING

Day Tuesday Date 3/24/09 Room 2172

Starting Time 2:14 Ending Time 3:33

Recesses  ( to )

Presiding Member(s) Ackerman

CHECK ALL OF THE FOLLOWING THAT APPLY:

Open Session  Electronically Recorded (taped)   
Executive (closed) Session  Stenographic Record   
Televised

TITLE OF HEARING or BILLS FOR MARKUP: (Include bill number(s) and title(s) of legislation.)

Update on Lebanon

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ackerman, Carnahan, McMahon, Costa, Ellison, Klein, Burton, Fortenberry, Rohrabacher

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: (Mark with an \* if they are not Members of HIRC.)

Issa\*

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes  No

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: (List any statements submitted for the record.)

ACTIONS TAKEN DURING THE MARKUP: (Attach copies of legislation and amendments.)

RECORDED VOTES TAKEN (FOR MARKUP): (Attach final vote tally sheet listing each member.)

Subject	Yeas	Nays	Present	Not Voting

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE \_\_\_\_\_

or  
TIME ADJOURNED 3:33

  
Subcommittee Staff Director

Opening Statement  
Ranking Member Dan Burton  
Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
March 24, 2009  
Lebanon

Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling today's hearing. Lebanon is a country whose vision for a socially rich, prosperous, and democratic future could serve as a model for what we hope to see in the Middle East region. The cultural and media capital of the Arab world, Lebanon is comprised of a uniquely rich social and religious fabric where Christians, Sunnis, and Shias live in relative harmony. Ever since Lebanon's Cedar Revolution in 2005, when a third of the Lebanese people flooded the streets in peaceful protest against Syria's foreign domination, Lebanon has struggled to remain on the path to peace and democracy.

Every so often a defining moment arrives, a moment capable of dramatically altering the future of a Nation and its people. The country of Lebanon is on the brink of one of these moments, and the outcome of the June 2009 Lebanese parliamentary elections will be critical in determining the future direction of U.S. policy toward Lebanon. If Syria's allies secure a parliamentary majority, continued U.S. support for Lebanon's economy, civil society, and armed forces should be in suspended.

It is impossible to discuss Lebanon without focusing heavily on Syria and Iran. Desperate to regain its lost foothold in Lebanon, Syria, along with Iran and Hezbollah, has adopted a strategy of systematically destabilizing Lebanon. Working together, Syria, Iran and Hezbollah have conspired to sponsor terror attacks, assassinations, incite violence against Israel, discourage wholesome indigenous democratic movements, arm and train militias, and so on; all to ensure the election of a Parliament sympathetic to Syrian control of Lebanon.

In light of the precarious situation in Lebanon, we must make it crystal clear that the United States will not support anything less than the untainted election of a constitutionally legitimate government in Lebanon. We must make clear to the regimes in Syria and Iran, in no uncertain terms, that the United States will not support a puppet regime that seeks to thwart the will of the Lebanese people, nor will the United States remain silent in the face of the spread of militant Islamic extremism. We must not allow Lebanon to be dragged back into chaos and war. Lebanon's enemies should understand that we are fully dedicated to Lebanon's future as a model for independent and sovereign democracy in the Middle East. We cannot abandon the Lebanese people and our shared ideals at this critical moment. The stakes are simply too high--for Lebanon, for the Middle East, and for us.

That is why I am seriously concerned about the Obama administration's decision to "engage" Syria. Syria's desire to engage with the US is driven by Syria's desire to persuade the United States to end an impartial UN tribunal investigation into the role Syria played in the February 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. The fact that Syria is so forcefully resisting the tribunal should speak volumes. Syria also wants us to pressure Israel into giving up the strategic Golan Heights.

Neither of these outcomes is in our national interest and the Administration should resist falling into the misguided mindset that engagement is worth any price. It is not. And we are fooling ourselves if we believe that terrorist-sponsoring dictators are good-faith partners in dialog or can be bought off with minimal concessions. In fact, President Obama's overtures to Iran over the weekend have already been scoffed at by Ayatollah Khamenei, the "Supreme Leader" of Iran. He said that Obama has "insulted the Islamic Republic of Iran from the first day." This rebuke comes only a few short days after the President's unprecedented video message to the Iranian people which did not once reference freedom, democracy or human rights, but instead went out of its way to praise Iran.

I salute Ambassador Feltman, our witness today, and our Ambassador to Lebanon, Michele Sison. Both are hard-working public servants who have advanced our interests well. But this body must consider the bigger policy. I hope we will scrutinize this approach of engagement very carefully because I greatly fear that even if such efforts are “successful,” we may not like the kind of “peace” that we have bought.

**Statement of Congressman Gene Green  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia  
“Update on Lebanon”  
March 24, 2009**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing today and I would like to welcome our witness, Sec. Feltman. I appreciate your being here and your work on this issue.

Given what happened after the last Lebanese election, I think it’s wise we prepare ourselves for all possible electoral outcomes.

Lebanese voters remain largely divided between the pro-independence March 14 coalition and the March 8 coalition, which is closely aligned with Syria and Hezbollah.

Most analysts predict a very close election with the March 8 coalition holding a slight advantage at this stage in the campaign.

If the March 8 coalition secures a parliamentary majority, what would this mean for U.S. policy towards Lebanon, our economic and security assistance to Lebanon, and most importantly, our quest for peace in the region?

Hezbollah’s number two leader has stated that “if the opposition wins, Hezbollah wishes to form a national unity government.” Do you think he’s sincere about this, and if so, how different would you expect that coalition to govern compared to the existing government?

How would you expect your bureau to deal with a Lebanese government in which Hezbollah plays a larger role?

Finally, I think it's important that we address Israel's stake in the outcome of this election.

I remain concerned about Hezbollah's role in Lebanon, and I look forward to your update on the Security Council resolution 1701.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, and I look forward to hearing your testimony, Sec. Feltman.