

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 13, 2006

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

It has been over two years since you exercised your authority under the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act (SALSRA, P.L. 108-175) and other U.S. laws and issued Executive Order 13338, blocking property of certain persons and prohibiting the export of certain goods to Syria.

Since then, we have witnessed some positive results stemming from this decisive action – most notably, the withdrawal of Syrian armed forces from Lebanon. However, there has also been no let-up in Syria's support for terrorism, aid for Iraqi insurgents, and its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction -- all while strengthening its alliance with fellow rogue state, Iran, and continuing its destructive interference in Lebanese politics.

It is therefore time to increase the pressure on Damascus by implementing the full range of sanctions included in the SALSRA.

Syria has refused to heed calls to be a responsible international actor. It houses a long list of Palestinian and Islamist terrorist groups, including Hamas, and provides critical support for Hezbollah. We strongly condemn this morning's cross-border attack by Hezbollah into Israel and the group's kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers.

It is clear that kidnapping of Israeli soldiers is becoming standard practice for the Syrian-backed terrorist groups. In fact, Hamas leader Khaled Mashal has been directly implicated in the abduction of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. Mashal is based in Damascus where he directs fundraising, arms procurement, and terror operations for Hamas. After this kidnapping, Syrian officials publicly reaffirmed their support for the Hamas terrorist group. Our Ambassador in Israel, Richard Jones, said about the kidnapping, "The problem is in Damascus and that's where I think we should focus the world's attention." We agree.

Syria is no mere associate or landlord for terrorists—its support directly enables the commission of acts of terror. Israeli authorities have learned that Syrian border officials have personally escorted members Islamic Jihad to terrorist training camps south of the Syrian capital.

Syria has also had a direct hand in facilitating violence in Iraq. Through Syria's porous border, extremists enter Iraq where they support the terror activities against the Iraqi people and American soldiers.

Damascus is also pursuing advanced weapons of mass destruction. Various recent reports cite Syria's success in manufacturing aerial bombs with chemical agents, acquiring biological weapons, and possibly even receiving nuclear materials through the A.Q Kahn network. Specifically, a British intelligence report titled "Companies and Organizations of Proliferation Concern," and disclosed by The Guardian newspaper in October of last year, cited: "The Syrian Atomic Energy Commission as having procured technology that could be used for the production of nuclear weapons." Jane's Defense Weekly has reported that "Damascus is nevertheless pursuing what they describe as 'an innovative chemical warfare (CW) program in co-operation with Iran.'"

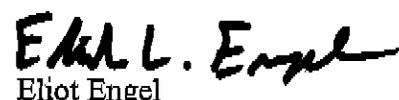
Then, there is the issue of Syria's continued interference in Lebanese sovereignty. Even though its troops have been removed, it is widely believed that Syrian intelligence personnel continue to operate throughout Lebanon. Clearly, the Assad regime has not yet accepted Lebanon's independence and sovereignty.

Due to these actions and others, the U.S. must enhance the pressure on Syria to abandon policies that threaten U.S. national security, our interests, and our allies.

We respectfully urge you to immediately implement all sanctions available to you under the Syria and Lebanon Sovereignty Restoration Act to hold the Syrian regime accountable for these actions and to deny it the resources to engage in such destructive behavior.

Sincerely,


Heiana Ros-Lentinen
Member of Congress


Eliot Engel
Member of Congress