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Remarks by Ambassador John R. Bolton, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, on the Mehlis Report, at the Security Council Stakeout, December 12, 2005

Ambassador Bolton: Okay, let me just say a few words because I have to go into the Security Council. We are still reviewing the final report by Commissioner Mehlis. I think again it's a very professional, very well done report and it's very disturbing. Commissioner Mehlis says that evidence continues to point toward high-level Syrian involvement and high-level involvement by Lebanese security officials in the Hariri assassination. He delineates quite extensively continued Syrian obstructionism and even though some collaboration has been forthcoming the substance of the Mehlis report shows a failure by the government of Syria to comply with Resolution 1636. Let me just give you two examples, Commissioner Mehlis refers to the testimony that was taken in Vienna a few days ago from five Syrian witnesses, and you'll notice they are listed in the report under the subheading Syrian suspects. He then says in Paragraph 26 statements made by two of the suspects indicated that all Syrian intelligence documents concerning Lebanon had been burned. He said it was also confirmed by a letter transmitted by the head of the Syrian special investigation commission that no material regarding the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri has been found in Syrian intelligence archives. These matters require further investigation by the Commission. Now one other thing I think is quite significant referring to the witness Hussam Taher Hussam, who reportedly recanted his testimony according to the government of Syria, the Mehlis report says that "the Commission has also received credible information that prior to Mr. Hussam's recent public recantation of his statement to UNIIC, Syrian officials had arrested and threatened some of Mr. Hussam's close relatives in Syria. Preliminary investigation leads to the conclusion that Mr. Hussam is being manipulated by the Syrian authorities raising serious questions about whether the Syrian Judicial Commission is committed to conducting an independent, transparent, and professional investigation into this crime." That is not cooperation, ladies and gentlemen, that is obstruction of justice by the government of Syria.

Reporter: (inaudible)

Ambassador Bolton: We are still reviewing the Mehlis Commission report, which we received today. And we have no decision yet on what course we will recommend in the Council. But I will say this as we deliberate on a Presidential Statement on the assassination last night of yet another Lebanese Parliamentarian (S/PRST/2005/61) that it is time to look at the situation in Lebanon as a whole - 1559 and 1595 together. Now I really have to go in there.

Reporter:

Ambassador Bolton: We are considering what the response is, but I don't have anything to say on it now. I do have to go in, but I will talk to you when I come out.