



Syria's Weapons of Mass Destruction and Missile Development Programs

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Thank you, Madame Chairwoman and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss Syria's weapons of mass destruction and missile development programs. I understand that we will have a brief open hearing now and a closed session later today.

Syria remains a security concern on two important counts: terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. I will focus on the latter, although the potential linkages are obvious. Specifically, our Coalition's operations in Iraq showed that this Administration and the international community take the link between terrorism and WMD [weapons of mass destruction] most seriously. There is no graver threat to our country today than states that both sponsor terrorism and possess or aspire to possess weapons of mass destruction. Syria, which offers physical sanctuary and political protection to groups such as Hizballah, HAMAS, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and whose terrorist operations have killed hundreds of innocent people - including Americans -- falls into this category of states of potential dual threat. While there is currently no information indicating that the Syrian Government has transferred WMD to terrorist organizations or would permit such groups to acquire them, Syria's ties to numerous terrorist groups underlie the reasons for our continued anxiety.

Without question, among rogue states, those most aggressively seeking to acquire or develop WMD and their means of delivery, and which are therefore threats to our national security, are Iran and North Korea, followed by Libya and Syria. It is also the case that these states are among those we identify as state sponsors of terrorism. We aim not just to prevent the spread of WMD, but also to "roll back" and ultimately eliminate such weapons from the arsenals of rogue states and ensure that the terrorist groups they sponsor do not acquire weapons of mass destruction. As President Bush has said repeatedly, we will stress peaceful and diplomatic solutions to the proliferation threat. However, in order to roll back proliferation and protect innocent American citizens, as well as our friends and allies, we must allow ourselves the option to use every tool in our nonproliferation toolbox.

Obviously, many of you share these concerns. Members of this committee have sponsored the Syria Accountability Act, which would impose restrictions on the export of U.S. goods to Syria, as well as other measures. However, we already possess a broad mandate to sanction countries like Syria for proliferation activities under Executive Order 12938. This Executive Order, promulgated in 1994, requires the imposition of sanctions against foreign countries that have used chemical or biological weapons in violation of international law or have developed, produced, stockpiled or otherwise acquired chemical or biological weapons in violation of international law. The Executive Order requires denial of foreign assistance; denial of credit or financial assistance from U.S. Government agencies; U.S. opposition to multilateral development bank assistance; denial of defense exports and national security-sensitive exports; restrictions on imports into the U.S.; and a termination of aircraft landing rights. Many of these same penalties are duplicated in the proposed Syria Accountability Act.

Additionally, Section 4 of E.O. 12938, as amended in 1998, authorizes penalties against entities that have "materially contributed or attempted to contribute materially to the efforts of any foreign country, project, or entity of proliferation concern to use, acquire, design, develop, produce, or stockpile weapons of mass destruction or missiles capable of delivering such weapons." Penalties can include a ban on imports into the U.S. of goods, technology, or services produced by the sanctioned entity; a ban on U.S. procurement from these entities; and a ban on U.S. assistance. In addition, we have frequently augmented these penalties with a ban on defense exports to the entity in question.

The standard for acts triggering these measures under the Executive Order is very broad, and gives the decision-maker wide scope in punishing entities that choose to engage in proliferant behavior. Just in this year, we have imposed E.O. 12938 sanctions five times, including on the Chinese entity, North China Industries Corporation (NORINCO), and the Iranian entity, Shahid Hemmat Industrial Group. This Administration views sanctions as a useful tool for furthering our nonproliferation objectives and is determined to enforce existing sanctions laws to the fullest extent. The existing sanctions laws and the Executive Order, when properly applied, give the Administration the authority and flexibility to use sanctions to deter proliferation activity by rogue states and serial proliferators. Since I began serving in my present position, I have insisted on using the mandatory sanctions laws in the manner Congress intended.

Nonproliferation standards are all too often ignored and flagrantly violated by governments that view WMD as a means of enhancing their security and international influence. Many of these governments are resistant to conventional diplomatic dialogue. While we pursue the diplomatic track whenever possible, the United States and its allies must be willing to deploy more robust techniques, such as economic sanctions, as well as interdiction and seizure, or other means. The pursuit of WMD and ballistic missile delivery systems, especially by state sponsors of terrorism, must be neither cost free nor successful. Proliferators - and especially states still deliberating whether to seek WMD -- must understand that they will pay a steep price for their efforts. In short, if the language of persuasion fails, these states must see and feel the logic of adverse consequences. Moreover, adverse consequences must not only fall on the states aspiring to possess these weapons, but also on the states supplying them.

In situations where we cannot convince a state to stop proliferant behavior, we also have the option of interdicting shipments to ensure the technology does not fall in to the wrong hands. These interdiction efforts are key to a comprehensive nonproliferation strategy. Interdiction involves identifying an imminent shipment or transfer and working to impede the shipment. As the President noted in his National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction, we must enhance the capabilities of our military, intelligence, technical, and law enforcement communities to prevent the movement of WMD materials, technology, and expertise to hostile states and terrorist organizations.

On May 31, President Bush announced the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), a global multilateral arrangement to seize sensitive cargoes that may be in transit to and from states and non-state actors of proliferation concern. Since then, we have been working with ten other countries - Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and the UK - to develop a set of "principles" that identify practical steps necessary to interdict shipments of weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems, and related materials at sea, in the air, or on land. The eleven countries met in Madrid in June, and in Brisbane in July. On September 4 in Paris, we reached agreement and announced a Statement of Interdiction Principles. This represents the shared political commitment of these countries to strengthen efforts to combat the proliferation threat. The United States welcomes support for the PSI Principles of all states that share our concerns about proliferation and our resolve to take new and active measures to defeat this threat. Proliferators are using increasingly sophisticated and aggressive measures to defeat export controls and obtain technologies for their WMD or missile programs; we need to enhance our ability to prevent them from making these acquisitions. There exists a wide-spread consensus that this

menace, together with terrorism, constitutes the greatest challenge to international security generally and to our national security in particular.

It is important to stress that all interdiction activities conducted by PSI partners will be consistent with relevant national and international authorities. Importantly, substantial national and international authorities for interdiction already exist. In the event that a proliferator succeeds in circumventing export controls and a shipment of WMD or missile-related technology is discovered to be en route, PSI participants will explore how best to use the full range of counterproliferation tools -- from diplomatic, to intelligence, to operational -- to stop proliferation at sea, in the air, and on land. Properly planned and executed, interception of critical technologies while en route can prevent hostile states and non-state actors from acquiring these dangerous capabilities. At a minimum, interdiction can lengthen the time that proliferators will need to acquire new weapons capabilities, increase the cost, and demonstrate our resolve to combat proliferation.

The Paris meeting also continued work on the modalities for interdiction, in particular effective information sharing and operational capabilities for interdictions. Efforts to enhance our collective operational capabilities for action are essential. In support of this goal, PSI participants have agreed on a series of ten sea, air, and ground interdiction training exercises to occur into 2004. Australia just organized and executed one such exercise a few days ago in the Coral Sea, called "Pacific Protector," that involved both military and law enforcement assets. Four PSI partners, including the United States, sent vessels to the exercise, and all PSI partners were involved in some capacity.

Our long-term objective with the Proliferation Security Initiative is to create a web of counterproliferation partnerships that will impede trade in WMD, delivery systems, and related materials. To do so, we seek eventually to broaden participation in the PSI to include all like-minded countries that want to cooperate and can contribute actively to interdiction efforts. WMD and missile proliferation is a global problem that requires a global effort, and this initiative is not directed at any one country or region. It is global in scope. A robust interdiction effort requires cooperation with all like-minded countries - those who are leaders in nonproliferation as well as those who may have a direct relationship with proliferation activities. We want to ensure that countries make full use of their capabilities and authorities to interdict shipments. By working together, the combined sum of our efforts will be greater than the individual parts. I am encouraged by our progress on the PSI, and know that the PSI will be an important tool that we can use to counter the efforts of countries such as Syria that are often dependent on foreign suppliers in their quest to possess WMD.

Before I address the specifics of Syria's WMD programs, let me first discuss press reports that Iraq covertly transferred weapons of mass destruction to Syria in an attempt to hide them from UN inspectors and Coalition forces. We have seen these reports, reviewed them carefully, and see them as cause for concern. Thus far, we have been unable to confirm that such transfers occurred. We are continuing with the full breadth of resources at our command to seek conclusive evidence that any such transfer has taken place. We have raised with the Syrians on numerous occasions, even before military action against Iraq, the seriousness with which we would view any transfer of Iraqi dual-use or military related items into Syria.

We have seen Syria take a series of hostile actions toward Coalition forces in Iraq. Syria allowed military equipment to flow into Iraq on the eve of and during the war. Syria permitted volunteers to pass into Iraq to attack and kill our service members during the war, and is still doing so. Syria continues to provide safe haven and political cover to Hizballah in Lebanon, which has killed hundreds of Americans in the past. Statements from many of Syria's public officials during this time vilified the Coalition's motives in seeking to overthrow Saddam Hussein. Indeed, the United States portrayed as an enemy is a consistent theme found in newspapers and public statements in Syria as it is in other states in the region. Although Damascus has increased its cooperation regarding Iraq since the fall of the Iraqi regime, its behavior during Operation Iraqi Freedom underscores the importance of taking seriously reports and information on Syria's WMD capabilities.

Nuclear

As I informed Congress last fall, we are concerned about Syria's nuclear R&D program and continue to watch for any signs of nuclear weapons activity or foreign assistance that could facilitate a Syrian nuclear weapons capability. We are aware of Syrian efforts to acquire dual-use technologies -- some, through the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Technical Cooperation program -- that could be applied to a nuclear weapons program. In addition, Russia and Syria have approved a draft program on cooperation on civil nuclear power. Broader access to Russian expertise could provide opportunities for Syria to expand its indigenous capabilities, should it decide to pursue nuclear weapons. The Syrians have a Chinese-supplied "miniature" research reactor under IAEA safeguards at Dayr Al Hajar.

Syria is a party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and has a standard safeguards agreement with the IAEA but, like Iran, has not yet signed or, to our knowledge, even begun negotiations on the IAEA Additional Protocol. The Additional Protocol is an important tool that, if fully implemented, could strengthen the IAEA's investigative powers to verify compliance with NPT safeguards obligations and provides the IAEA with the ability to act quickly on any indicators of undeclared nuclear materials, facilities and activities. We believe the Additional Protocol should be a new minimal standard for countries to demonstrate their nonproliferation bona fides.

Chemical

Since the 1970s Syria has pursued what is now one of the most advanced Arab state chemical weapons (CW) capabilities. It has a stockpile of the nerve agent sarin that can be delivered by aircraft or ballistic missiles, and has engaged in the research and development of more toxic and persistent nerve agents such as VX.

Syria is fully committed to expanding and improving its CW program, which it believes serves as a deterrent to regional adversaries. Syria continues active chemical munitions testing, although it has not used chemical agents in any conflicts. Although Syria is more self-sufficient than most other third-world CW capable states, foreign assistance has been a key element in the establishment and operation of Syria's CW program. In particular, Syria remains heavily dependent on foreign sources for key elements of its chemical warfare program, including precursor chemicals and key production equipment. As a result Syria will need to continue foreign procurement activities - something the PSI is designed to counter -- in order to continue its CW program. Syria is not a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Biological

We believe that Syria is continuing to develop an offensive biological weapons capability. Syria has signed, but not ratified, the Biological Weapons Convention. These "poor man's nuclear weapons" do not require a large production capability, and depending on the agent and dissemination method, can be extremely lethal.

Missiles

Syria has a combined total of several hundred Scud and SS-21 SRBMs, and is believed to have chemical warheads available for a portion of its Scud missile force. Syria has also developed a longer-range missile -- the Scud D -- with assistance from North Korea. Syria's missiles are mobile and can reach much of Israel from positions near their peacetime garrisons and portions of Iraq, Jordan, and Turkey from launch sites well within the country. Damascus is pursuing both solid- and liquid-propellant missile programs and relies extensively on foreign assistance in these endeavors. North Korean and Iranian entities have been most prominent in aiding Syria's recent ballistic missile development. Syrian regional concerns may lead Damascus to seek a longer range ballistic missile capability such as North Korea's No Dong MRBM.

Advanced Conventional Weapons

Damascus has sought to acquire Russian SA-10 and SA-11 air defense systems, MiG-29 and Su-27 fighters, and T-80 or T-90 main battle tanks, as well as upgrades for the aircraft, armored weapons, or air defense systems already in its inventory. But its inability to fund large purchases and its outstanding debt to Russia have curbed substantial upgrades and acquisitions.

Conclusion

Of course, I will have much more to say on all of these subjects during the closed hearing and I look forward to a more specific and detailed discussion than we can have in an open hearing. As we all recognize, the importance of protecting and preserving vital intelligence sources and methods necessarily and properly restricts what we can say publicly. Nonetheless, the conduct of national security requires that we take all available information into account, which I believe we will be able to do in a classified session.

When the world witnessed the destructive potential of terrorism on September 11, we were reminded of the need to remain steadfast in recognizing emerging threats to our security. In Syria we see expanding WMD capabilities and continued state sponsorship of terrorism. As the President has said, we cannot allow the world's most dangerous weapons to fall into the hands of the world's most dangerous regimes, and will work tirelessly to ensure this is not the case for Syria.

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