



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Press Statement

Richard Boucher, Spokesman

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U.S. Recalls Ambassador to Syria

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has decided to recall Ambassador Margaret Scobey, the United States Ambassador to the Syrian Arab Republic, for urgent consultations following the brutal murder of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri on February 14. Ambassador Scobey will be returning imminently to Washington from Damascus.

Following the murder of former Prime Minister Hariri, Ambassador Scobey delivered a message to the Syrian Government expressing our deep concern as well as our profound outrage over this heinous act of terrorism. Syria maintains a sizeable presence of military and intelligence officials in Lebanon, in contravention of UN Security Council Resolution 1559. Yesterday's bombing calls into question the stated reason behind this presence of Syrian security forces: Lebanon's internal security. The Lebanese people must be free to express their political preferences and choose their own representatives, without intimidation and the threat of violence.

In recent months, we have raised repeatedly with senior officials of the Syrian Government a number of issues, including the Syrian presence in Lebanon, the continued presence and operational activities of international terrorist groups and the Iranian regime on and through Syrian territory, and the use of Syrian territory by the Iraqi insurgency. To date, these concerns have not been adequately addressed. We again call upon the Syrian government to take positive action on all these matters.

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