



## THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

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For Immediate Release  
Office of the Press Secretary  
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### **Fact Sheet: Implementing the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003**

#### **Today's Presidential Action**

**President Bush today signed an Executive Order implementing sanctions on Syria pursuant to the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003 ("the Act").** With the implementation of these sanctions, the President has demonstrated U.S. resolve to address the Syrian government's support for terrorist groups, its continued military presence in Lebanon, its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and its actions to undermine U.S. and international efforts with respect to the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq.

**Implementation of sanctions comes after many months of diplomatic efforts to convince the Syrian government to change its unacceptable behavior.** Secretary Powell conveyed U.S. concerns to Syrian President Asad repeatedly, including in their May 2003 meeting. The Syrian government has failed to take significant, concrete steps to address these concerns.

#### **The sanctions include:**

- Prohibition on the export to Syria of any items that appear on the United States Munitions List (arms and defense weapons, ammunition, etc.) or Commerce Control List (dual-use items such as chemicals, nuclear technology, propulsion equipment, lasers, etc.);
- Prohibition on the export to Syria of products of the United States, other than food and medicine; and
- Prohibition on aircraft of any air carrier owned or controlled by the Syrian government to take off from or land in the United States.

**Under the authority provided in Section 5(b) of the Act, the President has determined that it is in the national security interest of the United States to waive the application of these sanctions in certain cases and for certain products, as specified in the Department of Commerce's General Order No. 2.**

**In addition to the sanctions provided for under the Act, the President has decided to impose additional sanctions.**

- Under Section 311 of the USA PATRIOT Act, the Secretary of the Treasury is to issue a notice of proposed rulemaking with respect to a measure to require U.S. financial institutions to sever correspondent accounts with the Commercial Bank of Syria based on money laundering concerns.

- Pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), the President has authorized the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to freeze, within the jurisdiction of the United States, assets that belong to certain Syrian individuals and government entities.

**The President will consider additional sanctions against the Government of Syria if it does not take serious and concrete steps to cease its support for terrorist groups, terminate its weapons of mass destruction programs, withdraw its troops from Lebanon, and cooperate fully with the international community in promoting the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq.**

## **Syria's Record**

**Terrorism:** The Government of Syria provides safe haven to Palestinian rejectionist groups, whose Damascus-based leaderships maintain operational ties with those who conduct acts of terror and violence against Israel. Syria supports and facilitates arms supplies to Hizballah, a terrorist organization that is involved in terrorist acts in the region and around the world. These terrorist groups actively undermine the U.S. goal of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

**Lebanon:** Syrian troops entered Lebanon in 1976. Today, Syria maintains a military presence in Lebanon inconsistent with the spirit of the 1989 Taif Accords, which called for the extension of Lebanese government control over the entire territory of Lebanon.

**Weapons of Mass Destruction:** Syria has one of the most advanced Arab state chemical weapons capabilities and it is highly probable that Syria continues to develop an offensive biological weapons capability. It has a stockpile of the nerve agent sarin and has engaged in the research and development of more toxic and persistent nerve agents such as VX. In addition, Syria maintains an inventory of Scud and SS-21 short-range ballistic missiles, and is believed to have chemical warheads available for a portion of its Scud missile force. While Syria is a party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, it has not yet signed the International Atomic Energy Agency's Additional Protocol, which strengthens the IAEA's investigative powers to verify compliance with nuclear safeguards.

**Iraq:** On the eve of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Syria sent military supplies to Saddam Hussein's forces. While in recent months Syria has taken steps to close its shared border with Iraq, Syria nevertheless remains a preferred transit point for foreign fighters into Iraq. In addition, Syria has failed to transfer the approximately \$200 million in frozen Iraqi assets that remain in Syrian banks to the Development Fund for Iraq (DFI), as required under United Nations Security Council resolution 1483 (2003). Paragraph 23 of that resolution requires Member States to freeze and, unless they are the subject of a prior judicial, administrative, or arbitral lien or judgment, immediately transfer to the DFI funds or other financial assets that belonged to the previous Government of Iraq or its state entities or that were removed from Iraq by Saddam Hussein or other senior officials of his regime and their immediate family members. Syria earned an estimated \$3 billion in illicit trade with Iraq in violation of United Nations sanctions.

## **Background on Syria Accountability Act**

In December 2003, the President signed the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003, which provides for the imposition of a series of sanctions against Syria.

The Act requires that sanctions be imposed against Syria, absent a determination that Syria meets certain requirements set out in the Act. Section 5(a)(1) of the Act requires the President to prohibit the export of items on the United States Munitions List and Commerce Control List. Section 5(a)(2) of the Act

requires the President to choose two or more sanctions from a list of six, specifically:

- Ban on exports of products of the United States;
- Ban on U.S. businesses investing or operating in Syria;
- Restriction on travel of Syrian diplomats to within a 25-mile radius of their posting in the United States;
- Prohibition on Syrian air carriers from take-off, landing, and overflight of the United States;
- Reduction of U.S. diplomatic contacts with Syria; or
- Blocking U.S. persons from engaging in any property transactions with the Syrian government.

The Act provides for waivers of these sanctions if the President determines it is in the "national security interest" of the United States to do so, and the President submits a report to Congress giving reasons for the determination.

In signing the legislation, the President stated that the Executive Branch would construe and implement section 5 of the Act in a manner consistent with the President's Constitutional authority to conduct the Nation's foreign affairs and as Commander in Chief.

The Act requires the Secretary of State to submit an annual report to Congress, beginning in June 2004, on Syria's progress toward meeting the conditions set forth in the Act, any connections between Syrian-based terrorists and terrorist attacks on the United States or its allies, and U.S. efforts against Hizballah and other Syrian-supported terrorist organizations.

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