S. HRG. 111–700

ASSESSING THE STRENGTH OF HEZBOLLAH

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NEAR EASTERN AND SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIAN AFFAIRS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

JUNE 8, 2010

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations

Available via the World Wide Web: http://www.gpoaccess.gov/congress/index.html

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
62–141 PDF WASHINGTON : 2010

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
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ASSESSING THE STRENGTH OF HEZBOLLAH

TUESDAY, JUNE 8, 2010

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NEAR EASTERN AND
SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIAN AFFAIRS,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 3 p.m., in room SD–419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Robert P. Casey (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Senators Casey, Shaheen, Kaufman, Corker, and Risch.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT P. CASEY, Jr., U.S. SENATOR FROM PENNSYLVANIA

Senator CASEY. We will get started.

Thank you very much, everyone, for being here. We are trying to start relatively close to on time. I think we are right on time.

We are grateful for your presence here, especially the members of both panels. I told the panelists before we began that we are going to try to keep each panel within that 1-hour-per-panel timeframe if we can do that, and I think we should be able to.

But today, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South and Central Asian Affairs meets to examine the grave implications of Hezbollah's mounting political and military strength in Lebanon. Many experts say that Lebanon, with its deep sectarian struggles, is a bellwether for the political-religious balance of power in the Middle East.

Hezbollah's activities have a direct impact on broader United States interests in the region, including inspiring militancy, threatening regional stability, and complicating prospects for a peace settlement between Israel and the Palestinians. Finally, we will consider policy options for the United States and others to strengthen the Lebanese Government so that it can fully control its territory.

As we meet here today, Hezbollah is stronger than it has ever been, politically and, of course, militarily, and its growing strength poses a direct threat to stability in the region. Against the backdrop of rising tensions in the region, it is critically important that this committee and the subcommittee conduct a thorough examination of these issues.

During Prime Minister Hariri's visit to Washington last month, President Obama reaffirmed the United States commitment to strengthening Lebanon's sovereignty and independence. Lebanon is a key front line for pro-Western moderates who are battling advocates of the Syria-Iran resistance model. Lebanon's southern fron-

tier is one of the most volatile borders in the Middle East. This tense area can easily devolve into conflict, sparked by a perceived or real provocation or by Hezbollah's avowed retaliation for the 2008 assassination of its intelligence chief.

From the inception of Hezbollah—from the very beginning in the 1980s to the present—the elimination of the state of Israel has been one of the organization's primary goals. At the same time, Iran continues to transfer weapons to Hezbollah in violation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701. And Hezbollah continues and gives the Iranian regime a dangerous proxy that seriously threatens United States interests as well as, of course, Israel's existence. Last November, Israel intercepted a ship carrying hundreds of tons of Iranian weapons intended for Hezbollah.

Thus, among the most pressing concerns is Hezbollah's refusal to disarm, as called for in the 1989 Taif Accord that ended the Lebanese civil war and more recently in U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1559 and, again, 1701. The substantial demilitarization, if not the complete disarmament, of Hezbollah is required to transform Lebanon from a perpetually war-torn society and geopolitical pawn into a durable 21st century state. As long as Hezbollah is armed, the group can dominate Lebanon through threat of force.

Just 4 years after its 34-day war with Israel, Hezbollah's military capabilities today are more robust than ever. With the help of Iran and Syria, its arsenal has become more sophisticated and more lethal. During the 2006 conflict, Hezbollah fired approximately 4,000 rockets—4,000 rockets—into Israel, killing 44 Israeli citizens. Furthermore, it retains military superiority to Lebanon's armed forces. In April, Defense Secretary Gates said Hezbollah had, and I quote, "far more rockets and missiles than most governments in the world."

We must never forget that Hezbollah and its affiliates have planned or have been linked to numerous attacks against the United States, Israel, and other Western targets, including the bombings in 1983 of the United States Embassy in Beirut and the U.S. Marine barracks, which together killed 200 Marines and 58 other Americans. There are reports that Hezbollah was involved in training Shia militias in Iraq which carried out attacks against United States forces.

Hezbollah's political authority in Lebanon also has risen. Under Secretary General Nasrallah's leadership, Hezbollah has become a significant part of Lebanon's political fabric. Unfortunately, Nasrallah has inspired many in the Arab world to regard Hezbollah as a legitimate resistance movement, which propagates militancy.

Last November, 5 months after Lebanon's parliamentary elections and subsequent intense political infighting, Prime Minister Hariri agreed to share power with Hezbollah and its allies. Shortly thereafter, Hezbollah won a significant political victory by acquiring a veto power in the government because it acquired control over a "blocking third" number of Cabinet positions. Additionally, the Parliament passed a bill that effectively allows Hezbollah to keep its weapons.

Its relative political strength and formidable arsenal makes Lebanon's political future uncertain. The nature of the role that Hezbollah will play in that future and in Lebanon's security

arrangements are the focus of intense public debate in the country. Most, I should say, Lebanese want a normalized Lebanon, freed from the role of being a client state and relieved of the threat of a formidable private militia.

That said, there are significant pockets of support for Hezbollah in parts of Lebanese society, which sends a strong message of hostility to Israel. That unyielding hostility to Israel suggests that irreconcilable differences could emerge within Lebanon's leadership, particularly if the resolution of outstanding Lebanese or Syrian disputes with Israel over specific territories improves the prospects for bilateral peace agreements.

The United States must continue to play an active role in strengthening the domestic societal and security elements of the Lebanese Government. We look forward to hearing whether our witnesses believe that United States aid to Lebanon, including the administration's $136 million request for foreign assistance in the fiscal year 2011 budget, is sufficient to bolster the capabilities of the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces.

Since fiscal year 2006, the United States has invested over $690 million in these programs. If Lebanon is to complete its long transition to a tolerant political system, the system it was before its civil war, the elected government and security forces will have to supplant Hezbollah as the prevailing source of security in the country. As we provide direct aid to Lebanon, we must ensure that United States arms are secure and do not make their way into Hezbollah's arsenal.

With the shift of power inside Lebanon toward Hezbollah, it is important, and more important than ever, that we decide what our redlines are in terms of United States military equipment. At the same time, the United States must fully explore what we are up against in Lebanon by examining the roles of Syria and Iran in strengthening Hezbollah.

We are grateful today and we are honored to be joined by two distinguished panels to help us assess these issues and evaluate policy options. On the first panel, we welcome Ambassador Jeffrey Feltman, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, and Daniel Benjamin, Counterterrorism Coordinator at the Department of State.

Our second panel, we welcome three witnesses from the private sector. First, Ambassador Ryan Crocker, who recently retired from the Department of State after 39 years—he doesn't look like it was that long—of public service, serving as Ambassador in five countries in the Middle East, including Lebanon and Syria, and I should also mention Iraq. That is where one of the first times I had a chance to meet him. He is now dean and executive professor of the George Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University.

Second, Dr. Augustus Richard Norton, professor of international relations and anthropology at Boston University, is here with us as well. He is an expert on Lebanon's Shia community and, as well, Hezbollah.

And finally, Danielle Pletka. She is a vice president of foreign and defense policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute and is an analyst on the region's complex politics and also a former

Senate Foreign Relations staffer. Am I correct? That is correct. OK. Welcome back.

So we thank our witnesses, and we look forward to their insights. And I at this time would like to turn to Senator Corker, if he has any opening comments?

Senator CORKER. I am far more interested in our witnesses, and thank you for being here. Thank you for your service, too.

Senator CASEY. And I want to thank Senator Corker for being with us. We will have others joining us as the hearing proceeds.

We will turn now to the opening statements from our witnesses. I encourage you to keep your remarks we always say brief and succinct. We have a gavel. We try not to use it. But we don't want to go too long.

You should know, and the range we are talking about is 5 to 7 minutes, but your whole statement will be made part of the record. So you don't have to read all of it, and if it is particularly long, we don't want you to read all of it because of those time constraints. We will get to explore some of the issues you may not be able to cover in your opening by way of questions.

So, Ambassador Feltman, would you like to begin?

STATEMENT OF HON. JEFFREY FELTMAN, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Ambassador FELTMAN. Chairman Casey, Senator Corker, thanks for inviting Ambassador Benjamin and me to testify today on this important topic.

Hezbollah is an issue that I have been following closely, particularly since I was confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon in summer of 2004, a position I held until late January 2008. The joint testimony that we wish to submit for the record goes into some detail regarding the threats that Hezbollah poses for Israel, for Lebanon, for the region, for our interests, and it also discusses a number of steps that the United States is taking to counter these threats.

But I would like to use my opening statement to cite a couple of specific examples of Hezbollah's behavior that I witnessed when I was Ambassador to Beirut. I think that these examples will demonstrate both the pernicious role of Hezbollah inside Lebanon, but also the fact that Hezbollah is neither infallible nor invincible.

The first example is one that you cited, Mr. Chairman, Hezbollah's 2006 war with Israel. That war broke out in July 2006 when Hezbollah assailants crossed the U.N.-delineated border between Lebanon and Israel, killing five Israeli soldiers and kidnapping two. Now, this was not the first time that Hezbollah had attempted to do something like this. In November 2005, the previous year, Hezbollah had a similar plot that Israel, in fact, foiled.

But it is worth remembering that just 3 weeks before this July 2006 war was kicked off, Hamas had done something similar in Gaza. Hamas operatives had crossed into Israel, captured the soldier, Gilad Shalit, who they continue to hold, and Israel reacted very strongly.

I, as Ambassador, went to Lebanese political leaders inside the government, outside the government, across the political spectrum,

and I said, my gosh, look at Israel's reaction to what Hamas did. Imagine if Hezbollah had succeeded back in November, a few months earlier, in kidnapping those soldiers it tried to do. Imagine what would have happened to Lebanon. All the Lebanese political leaders who I saw, despite their political leanings, agreed with me. It would have been a catastrophe for Lebanon.

Nevertheless, a few weeks later, Hezbollah did launch a raid, less than a month after Shalit had been captured, and dragged Lebanon into a bloody conflict in which many civilians lost their lives, infrastructure destroyed, et cetera. Now, afterward, Hezbollah claimed that that 2006 war was "divine victory." But I doubt that many Lebanese would agree.

In fact, Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah later had to issue a begrudging sort of apology on national television. He disingenuously stated that had he anticipated Israel's reaction, he would not have ordered the kidnapping. Moreover, as a direct result of that war in 2006, Hezbollah lost its direct line of attack against Israel.

Before the war, Hezbollah routinely launched rocket, mortar attacks across the blue line into Israel or into Shebaa Farms sort of as a show of strength, a show of control. But today, by contrast, south Lebanon hosts more than 11,000 UNIFIL troops, plus thousands of Lebanese Armed Forces.

U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701, which ended that conflict in 2006, continues to enjoy popular and political support in Lebanon. So what does this mean? What it means is that Hezbollah cannot easily renew its patterns of attacks across the blue line into Israel. If it did so, it would do so at considerable political cost inside Lebanon.

And so, for nearly 4 years now, not a single civilian on either side of the blue line has been killed through active military or hostile acts. Now, without minimizing the real dangers that Hezbollah poses, I note that southern Lebanon and northern Israel have not had such stability and security in decades.

Second example I will cite briefly is Hezbollah's intentional crippling of Lebanese constitutional institutions in the 2006–2008 period. As you know, as a result of the 2005 Lebanese elections, a new Lebanese Government was formed with a proindependence majority and a mandate in support of Lebanese sovereignty. Hezbollah, in fact, joined that national unity government.

Yet a little more than a year later, in November 2006, Hezbollah, dragging its allies with it, cited a procedural pretext to withdraw from that government. Hezbollah expected the government to collapse. It didn't.

So what did they do next? They launched a massive sit-in, starting in December 2006, again expecting the Cabinet to resign. It did not.

They then blocked the Lebanese Parliament from meeting. They blocked an election of a Lebanese President, all expecting people to blink. They didn't.

Ultimately, in May 2008, to counter Cabinet decisions it saw as threatening, Hezbollah had to do what Hassan Nasrallah had sworn Hezbollah would never do, which is turn its arms against the Lebanese people, the very people Hezbollah claimed to be de-

fending. In essence, Hezbollah used force to assert a right to veto any government decision against its interests while refusing any public accountability or oversight of its own interests.

It is a sad reality, but there are real political costs to Hezbollah force behavior. The Lebanese people have not forgotten the 2006 war, nor the events of 2008 in May.

If you measure how Hezbollah and especially its allies have fared in elections at all levels, you see erosions and limitations. I am talking about municipal elections, syndicate elections, student elections, and even parliamentary elections. Erosion particularly in the political strength of Hezbollah's primary Christian ally and limitations to the attractiveness of Hezbollah's message to Lebanese more broadly.

The Obama administration is firmly committed to supporting the Lebanese people and the strength of Lebanon's democratic institution, including Lebanon's legitimate security forces that you mentioned, Chairman, the LAF, and the ISF. Our diplomatic engagement with Syria or any other party will not come at Lebanon's expense.

We will continue to support Israel's right to defend itself, and we will continue to take measures to inhibit and counter Hezbollah's strength and capabilities. We will continue energetically in pursuing a comprehensive peace in the region because accomplishing this is in our own vital national interest, as well as in the interest of the region and the world.

I want to thank the committee for its support of this important work, including your vote to send Ambassador Robert Ford's nomination to the full Senate for confirmation. And I thank the committee again for holding this hearing.

I look forward to your questions.

[The joint prepared statement of Ambassador Feltman and Ambassador Benjamin follows:]

JOINT PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR JEFFREY D. FELTMAN, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS, AND AMBASSADOR DANIEL BENJAMIN, COORDINATOR FOR COUNTERTERRORISM, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Chairman Casey, members of the subcommittee, thank you for the invitation to appear before you today to discuss Hezbollah. We share this committee's deep concerns about the threats posed by this terrorist group, its activities, and the support and direction it receives from outside actors. We look forward to discussing Hezbollah's position within Lebanon, its destabilizing role in the country and the wider region, and our ongoing efforts to promote the sovereignty and independence of the state of Lebanon, as well as peace and stability in the broader Middle East.

Hezbollah's persistence as a well-armed terrorist group within Lebanon, as well as its robust relationships with Iran and Syria, and the transfer of increasingly sophisticated missiles and rockets to Hezbollah, threaten the interests of the United States, Lebanon, and our partners in the region, especially Israel. Our ongoing efforts to counter those threats include cutting off terrorism financing and interdicting illicit arms shipments, as well as bilateral and multilateral diplomatic efforts aimed at ending those arms transfers and supporting the legitimate Government of Lebanon. We have warned Syria directly about the potential consequences of these destabilizing actions. Most importantly, we are working to achieve a comprehensive peace in the region, centered on a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To be successful, this comprehensive peace needs to include a solution to the problem of Hezbollah's weapons and hostility. A comprehensive peace by definition must also include Lebanon and Syria as full partners.

A THREAT TO LEBANON'S INTERESTS

Lebanon is a state with a vibrant civil society; however, its people also have a history of relying on sectarian and community leaders. Over the years, this tradition of political decentralization has inhibited the rise of strong state institutions and a truly unifying sense of national citizenship. Hezbollah has exploited this environment and managed to attract popular support among segments of the population that have felt traditionally neglected by a weak state or particularly vulnerable to threats from within and outside the country.

Hezbollah attempts to portray itself as a natural part of Lebanon's political system and a defender of Lebanese interests. But its actions demonstrate otherwise. Hezbollah has demonstrated repeatedly its unwillingness to adhere to the rule of law and submit to the Government of Lebanon's legitimate authority. The group's maintenance of a large and potent militia; its repeated use of force, including against Lebanese civilians and civilians of other nationalities; its ongoing violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1701; and its refusal to comply with the disarmament called for in both the Taif Accord and UNSCR 1559, render it a dangerous and destabilizing player in Lebanon and in the region. Hezbollah continues to pursue its interests and those of its chief outside sponsor, Iran, by manipulating the Lebanese political system to protect its own power. Hezbollah refuses any public oversight or accountability of its activities, which have plunged Lebanon into war in the past and could do so again, while at the same time Hezbollah demands the right to veto decisions taken by the Lebanese Government.

Hezbollah remains the most technically capable terrorist group in the world and a continued security threat to the United States. Hezbollah is responsible for some of the deadliest terrorist attacks against Americans in history, and the United States has designated it as a Foreign Terrorist Organization since 1997. While we recognize that Hezbollah is not directly targeting the United States and U.S. interests today, we are aware that could change if tensions increase with Iran over that country's nuclear program. The administration has also reiterated that it will not deal with or have any contact with the terrorist organization.

There has been much debate over the political identity of Hezbollah, as well as the prospects for Hezbollah to become a legitimate political party within Lebanon. Following Lebanon's bloody civil war, other militias disbanded or were integrated into Lebanon's legitimate defense force, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). However, despite the group's rhetoric and political campaigning, there remains today no meaningful distinction between the military and political wings of Hezbollah, as Hezbollah's own leaders regularly acknowledge publicly.

Should Hezbollah truly desire to join the ranks of Lebanon's other political groups in its democratic system, its path would be clear: it would fully disarm, like all other militias, renounce terrorism and political intimidation, and acknowledge the authority of the Government of Lebanon (GOL) and that government's right, like other governments, to a monopoly on the use of force. Under those circumstances we could reconsider the group's status. Make no mistake, these are significant hurdles and we have seen no indication to date that Hezbollah is ready to take these steps. The fact that Hezbollah is not willing to take these steps reveals its real motivations: since we have no doubt that Hezbollah could remain a powerful political voice inside Lebanon even without maintaining arms that violate Security Council Resolutions and endanger Lebanon, its refusal to forswear violence and pursue its interests through political means demonstrates that its agenda is not purely Lebanese.

As we noted above, unlike other Lebanese groups that currently seek to play a productive role in Lebanon's political system, Hezbollah is the lone militia that refused to disarm following the signing of the Taif Accord, which marked the end of Lebanon's tragic civil war. Even following the "Cedar Revolution" of 2005, when the Lebanese people turned out in droves to reassert Lebanon's full independence and sovereignty, culminating in the withdrawal of Syrian forces, Hezbollah has remained in open defiance of the legitimate authority of the Lebanese Government, even when it has been part of the same government. In March 2005, as other Lebanese were preparing for the massive March 14 Cedar Revolution in reaction to the shocking murder of Rafiq Hariri, Hezbollah actually hosted a counterdemonstration, in defiance of Lebanese public opinion, to thank and show its appreciation for Iran and Syria. Hezbollah's arsenal of illegal weapons poses a clear and present danger to the security of Lebanon and the region. Its actions belie the "resistance" rhetoric that it is fond of repeating.

One need only look to the disastrous 2006 conflict, precipitated by Hezbollah's kidnapping of Israeli soldiers from across the Blue Line in indisputably Israeli territory, to see that its arms and aggressive action are a source and motivator for violence in the immediate region. Hezbollah's maintenance of arms caches in Southern

Lebanon, in clear violation of UNSCRs 1701 and 1559, demonstrates that Hezbollah seeks to project its military power in destabilizing fashion. In the 2006 case, Hezbollah, without consultation or approval of even its electoral allies, unilaterally chose to take actions that dragged the country into an agonizing and destructive conflict. Hezbollah's actions highlighted the impotence of the words of its primary Christian ally, Michel Aoun, who struggled to justify his controversial February 2006 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Hezbollah by saying that, with this MOU, Hezbollah accepted limits to its use of its arms.

Even more striking than the external conflict instigated by Hezbollah are the events of May 2008. In trying to mask its Iranian agenda, Hezbollah had regularly insisted that its arms would never be used against the Lebanese people. Yet in May 2008, Hezbollah did exactly that, attacking Lebanese citizens—the very people it claims to protect—in order to protest decisions of the Lebanese Government with which it disagreed. Using force to settle domestic political disputes clearly distorts and perverts Lebanon's democracy.

Despite the devastating effects of its 2006 war with Israel and the 2008 domestic conflict in Lebanon, which Hezbollah initiated, Hezbollah remains today one of the best armed and most dangerous militias in the world. Its capabilities exceed those of the legitimate Lebanese security services and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). UNSCR 1701 called for the establishment of a weapons-free zone in South Lebanon that UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) are actively working to implement. However, we believe that, in addition to its increased activities outside of UNIFIL's area of operations, Hezbollah continues to maintain weapons caches in the south and is actively seeking additional armaments.

Hezbollah also claims publicly to have reconstituted and improved its arsenal since the 2006 war. As Lebanon has no domestic arms industry, this would have undoubtedly been accomplished by means of smuggling activity via Syria and Iran. In 2008 alone, Iran provided hundreds of millions of dollars to Hezbollah and trained thousands of Hezbollah fighters at camps in Iran. Iran continues to assist Hezbollah in rearming, violating Security Council Resolution 1701. Iran also has been found to be in violation of UNSCR 1747, which prohibits it from exporting arms and related materiel. In 2009, U.N. Member States reported to the U.N.'s Iran Sanctions Committee three instances in which Iran was found to be transferring arms or related materiel to Syria, a regional hub for Iranian support to terrorist groups, such as Hezbollah. A number of media reports also have noted that Hezbollah continues using weapons depots in Syria to store its arms before transferring them into Lebanon. While Hezbollah no longer maintains an overt militia presence in southern Lebanon—the absence of an overt militia presence being a direct product of Security Council Resolution 1701—it has strengthened its militia infrastructure immediately north of the Litani River and in the Biqa' Valley since 2006.

While Iran continues to provide a significant portion of Hezbollah's funding, Hezbollah has also broadened its sources of financial support in recent years. Hezbollah is now heavily involved in a wide range of criminal activity, including the drug trade and smuggling. It also receives funds from both legitimate and illicit businesses that its members operate, from NGOs under its control, and from donations from its supporters throughout the world. Hezbollah also has established its own commercial and communications networks outside the Lebanese legal system that in essence rob the Lebanese treasury of the tax revenues that would come via legitimate licensing, registration, and tax reporting.

A THREAT TO THE REGION'S INTERESTS

Hezbollah's destabilizing actions also have a global reach. The recent conviction of a Hezbollah cell in Egypt for spying, plotting attacks on resorts frequented by tourists, and arms smuggling illustrates Hezbollah's growing regional reach and ambitions. In Iraq, we are also aware of Hezbollah providing training and other support to Shia militant groups. As of early 2007, an Iran-based individual by the name of Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis formed a militia group, employing instructors from Hezbollah to prepare this group and certain Jaysh al-Mahdi Special Groups for attacks against Coalition Forces in Iraq.

Hezbollah's web also extends to Europe and diplomatic missions abroad, where Hezbollah planned to attack the Israeli Embassy in Baku. While this attack was foiled, and the perpetrators are now imprisoned in Azerbaijan, these actions illustrate the group's continued disregard for the rule of law, both inside Lebanon and outside its borders.

We must also recognize that the ever evolving technology of war is making it harder to guarantee our partners' security. Despite efforts at containment, rockets with better guidance systems, longer range, and more destructive power are spread-

ing across the region, with many in the hands of nonstate actors accountable to no one. Reports that Syria transferred SCUD-class missiles to Hezbollah are deeply troubling; these destabilizing developments increase the risks of miscalculation and the possibility of hostilities.

On May 25 this year, Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's leader, gave a speech proclaiming for the first time that Hezbollah will target Israeli and Israel-bound military and commercial vessels if Israel initiates offensive action against Lebanese ports or undertakes a naval blockade of Lebanon in a future conflict. Hezbollah also has made a number of threats and claims recently about the expanding range of its arsenal, with Nasrallah stating that Hezbollah has the capability to hit Ben Gurion airport.

The Obama administration is committed to ensuring Israel's security and helping Israel to defend itself. The United States and Israel cooperate closely on security issues. On an ongoing basis, both countries participate in joint military planning, combined exercises and training, and collaborate on military research and weapons development.

The United States also cooperates extensively with Israel on ballistic missile defense to ensure Israel is protected against missile threats. We are working with Israel to further develop the Arrow Weapons System, the David's Sling system to defend against short-range rocket and missile threats, and the X-Band radar to provide early warning and interceptor integration capabilities. Additionally, our biannual military exercise "Juniper Cobra" is the largest joint-military exercise on missile defense. The Obama administration also committed to provide $205 million in additional funding to help Israel field the Iron Dome short-range missile defense system.

AN OBSTACLE TO PEACE

Time and again, we have seen that Hezbollah's weapons and Syria's support for its role as an independent armed force in Lebanon are a threat, both to Lebanon and Israel, as well as a major obstacle to achieving peace in the region.

Hezbollah exploits the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict to bolster its own interests and influence. The group claims to maintain arms in order to defend Lebanon from Israeli "aggression" and derives much of its popularity from its image as a "resistance" group. In truth, Hezbollah is actively using the conflict with Israel in order to gain regional popularity and justify its vast arsenal, acting as a point of leverage in the region for Iran. One of Hezbollah's rhetorical points regards Israeli overflights of Lebanese territory. The U.N. Secretary General has cited in his reports on UNSCRs 1559 and 1701 that these overflights are a violation of UNSCR 1701, a resolution which we are all committed to seeing fully implemented. Yet there is an unmistakable connection between these overflights and Hezbollah's blatant and ongoing efforts to evade the arms embargo that is the essence of UNSCR 1701; Hezbollah's activities create the very conditions that Hezbollah then uses as a pretext to justify its own destabilizing behavior, putting Lebanon at severe risk.

The Obama administration's efforts to defuse tensions and to achieve a comprehensive peace in the Middle East—defined as peace between Israel and the Palestinians, and between Israel and all its neighbor states—would, if successful, deal a significant blow to Hezbollah and its sponsor in Tehran.

Comprehensive regional peace has a special meaning in the context of Lebanon, where, for decades, the absence of peace has facilitated the operation of many organizations whose interests are not Lebanese. In the 1980s, Hezbollah took root with the vital assistance of Iranian money, training, weaponry and political support. Although Israel's withdrawal from Lebanese territory in 2000—withdrawal certified as complete by the United Nations—should have put an end to Hezbollah's claims to be resisting foreign occupation, Hezbollah has been able to manipulate weaknesses in Lebanon's domestic political structures to preserve the pretense of resistance. While the United States believes firmly that, in compliance with the territorial obligations of UNSCR 1701, Israel must withdraw its forces from northern Ghajjar, reoccupied during the 2006 conflict, the primary stumbling block to peace and stability between Israel and Lebanon is Hezbollah's arsenal and proven willingness to use it.

We understand clearly that a comprehensive peace cannot come at the expense of Lebanese interests, and we understand fully the sensitivity of the issue of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon who yearn for, and deserve, a viable state of Palestine that they can call home. But Hezbollah's arms and defiance of the international community take us further away from, not closer to, the comprehensive peace that is envisioned in the groundbreaking Arab Peace Initiative, supported unanimously by the Arab League and announced in Beirut in 2002. By contrast,

Iran and Hezbollah have a very different vision and show no signs of accepting Israel's right to exist.

THE PATH FORWARD

Hezbollah's insistence on remaining armed, aggressive, and unaccountable threatens important American interests and goals—especially our interests in Middle East peace and regional security, in containing the spread of destabilizing weapons and terror financing, and in a strong, democratic, and independent state of Lebanon.

The United States is committed to strengthening the Government of Lebanon and its institutions. Our support to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and Internal Security Force (ISF) is part of an international commitment to help bolster Lebanon's legitimate security services at the request of the Lebanese Government. Since 2006, we have committed more than $600 million to the LAF and ISF out of a conviction that the Lebanese army and police should provide protection for Lebanon's people. As demonstrated through their successful domestic counterterrorism operations, the operational improvements in the LAF and ISF as a result of U.S. military and security assistance have been significant thus far and have great potential for growth. The Lebanese state must be prepared, in terms of its institutions and capabilities, for that day when comprehensive peace is achieved; our assistance to the LAF and ISF needs to be seen in terms of that long-term investment. Moreover, the United States provides assistance and support in Lebanon that work to create alternatives to extremism, reduce Hezbollah's appeal to Lebanon's youth, and empower people through greater respect for their rights and greater access to opportunity. Through USAID and the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), we have contributed more than $500 million to this effort since 2006. These robust assistance programs represent one facet of our unwavering support for the Lebanese people and a strong, sovereign, stable, and democratic Lebanon. Since 2006, our total assistance to Lebanon has now exceeded $1 billion. If we let down the millions of Lebanese who yearn for a state that represents the aspirations of all Lebanese, we would create the conditions by which Hezbollah can, by filling a vacuum, grow even stronger.

The United States cooperates directly with international partners to constrict Hezbollah's range of action and impede its ability receive and transfer funds. Hezbollah's network of financial support knows no borders, with active operations in many places around the globe, including Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and Latin America. In addition to the Department of State's designation of Hezbollah as an FTO, the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has used Executive Order 13224, which was issued soon after the September 2001 attacks to bolster the U.S. Government's capability to target terrorists' financial networks, to target Hezbollah's global financial support system. A wide range of individuals and entities that are controlled by or affiliated with Hezbollah have been designated under the EO. Financial institutions around the world pay close attention to these designations. The entities that OFAC has targeted include banks and financial front companies operating in Lebanon and elsewhere, such as Bayt al-Mal and the Yousser Company; Hezbollah-linked NGOs including The Goodwill Charitable Organization, a fundraising office established indirectly by the Martyrs Foundation in Lebanon; Hezbollah's construction company, Jihad al-Bina; and individuals like Abd Al Menem Qubaysi, a Hezbollah supporter based in West Africa; Ghazi Nasr al Din and Fawzi Kan'an, two Venezuela-based supporters of Hezbollah; and the Barakat network of 10 individuals in the tri-border region of Latin America.

The United States has also taken action against Iranian entities that are involved in funding and supporting Hezbollah. Perhaps most importantly, in 2007 the U.S. Government designated Iran's Quds Force, the terrorist wing of Tehran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which has provided extensive support, equipment and training for Hezbollah. The year prior, the United States designated one of the largest Iranian state-owned banks, Bank Saderat, for transferring funds to Hezbollah and Palestinian rejectionist groups. From 2001–2006, for example, Bank Saderat was used by the Iranian Government to provide at least $50 million to Hezbollah. Hezbollah has used Bank Saderat to transfer funds, sometimes in the millions of dollars, to support the activities of other terrorist organizations, such as Hamas in Gaza.

From his earliest days in office, President Obama has put the difficult work of pursuing a comprehensive peace in the region at the top of his administration's agenda. The status quo strengthens rejectionists like Hezbollah who claim peace is impossible, and it weakens those who would accept coexistence. All of our regional challenges—confronting the threat posed by Iran, combating violent extremism, pro-

moting human rights and economic opportunity—become harder if the rejectionists grow in power and influence.

Leading our efforts, Senator George Mitchell has been working diligently with the parties to build the atmosphere that can produce a negotiated resolution to the conflict. We are encouraging Israel to continue building momentum toward a comprehensive peace by respecting the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people, stopping settlement activity, and addressing the humanitarian needs in Gaza. We are encouraging the Palestinians to do their part by continuing to ensure security, reform their institutions of governance, and end incitement. Regional states who must be concerned about the destabilizing impact of extremist groups like Hezbollah and Hamas must do more to bolster the efforts of the Palestinian Authority (PA) under President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad. The PA's institution-building plans deserve and require continued financial support, and the United States will continue to be a substantial donor. It is also in the interest of Arab States to advance the Arab Peace Initiative with actions, not just rhetoric.

Our goal of a comprehensive peace also requires that we work to resolve the conflicts between Israel and Syria and Israel and Lebanon. Through diplomacy and through Special Envoy Mitchell's efforts, we are actively seeking to restart peace negotiations between Israel and Syria, and to bring Syria to play a more positive role in the region. We are determined to try to build a constructive relationship with Syria, one in which Syria and the United States can be partners in support of that comprehensive peace. Given the differences between Syria and the United States, this will not be an easy or quick process. But, in light of our national interests in a comprehensive regional peace, we are working with the Syrians in a step-by-step process that we hope will build trust and create momentum.

We thank members of this committee for expeditiously voting Ambassador Ford out of committee, as we now await his confirmation by the full Senate. In addition to recent visits to Syria by administration officials, including Undersecretary of State Burns in February, restoring our Ambassador to Damascus will enable the administration to deliver strong, unfiltered messages readily, consistently, and directly to the highest levels of the Syrian Government. The Obama administration has made clear that our diplomatic relations with Syria will never come at the expense of Lebanon, Israel, Iraq, or any of our other partners in the region, and our communications will continue to emphasize the need for Syria to end its support for Hezbollah.

CONCLUSION

The United States continues to take the threats posed by Hezbollah to the United States, to Lebanon, to Israel, and the region at large, with the utmost seriousness. We are mounting considerable diplomatic, as well as counterterrorism, and assistance efforts aimed at minimizing the threat and influence of Hezbollah in the region, and promoting peace, stability, and prosperity across the Middle East.

Senator CASEY. Thank you very much.

Mr. Benjamin.

STATEMENT OF HON. DANIEL BENJAMIN, COORDINATOR FOR COUNTERTERRORISM, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Ambassador BENJAMIN. Chairman Casey, Ranking Member Risch, members of the subcommittee, thank you very much for invitation to appear here today to discuss Hezbollah.

We share this committee's deep concern about the threats posed by this very dangerous terrorist group, its activities, and the support and direction it receives from outside actors. Hezbollah remains the most technically capable terrorist group in the world, and it is responsible for some of the deadliest terrorist attacks against Americans in history.

Hezbollah's persistence as a well-armed terrorist group within Lebanon, its robust relationships with Iran and Syria, and their transfer of increasingly sophisticated missiles and rockets to Hezbollah threaten the interests of the United States, Lebanon, and our partners in the region, especially Israel.

While we recognize that Hezbollah is not directly targeting the United States today, we are aware that that could change, especially if tensions increase with Iran over that country's nuclear program.

On May 25, Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's leader, gave a speech proclaiming for the first time that Hezbollah will target Israeli and Israel-bound military and commercial vessels if Israel initiates offensive action against Lebanese ports or undertakes a naval blockade of Lebanon in a future conflict. Hezbollah has also made a number of claims recently about the expanding range of its arsenal, with Nasrallah stating that Hezbollah has the capability to hit Ben-Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv. Hezbollah claims to have reconstituted and improved its arsenal since the 2006 war.

In early April, we reiterated our grave concerns and alarm to the Syrian Government over reports that they provided Scud missiles to Hezbollah. Transferring weapons to Hezbollah, especially longer range missiles, poses a serious threat to Lebanon's neighbors, especially Israel. Such an action would have a profoundly destabilizing effect on the region, and we have warned the Syrian Government directly about the potential consequences of these actions.

We are also taking concrete steps to defend against the threat of Hezbollah's missiles. As President Obama and Secretary Clinton have said, our support of Israel's defense remains steadfast, particularly when it comes to protecting Israeli territory from rocket and ballistic missile technology threats.

We will continue to cooperate closely with Israel on antimissile programs, such as the Arrow program and David's Sling. The administration has also committed to providing Israel funding for the Israeli Iron Dome short-range ballistic missile interceptor. Our efforts will help ensure that Israel maintains the capability to defend against and mitigate these threats.

Iran continues to assist Hezbollah in rearming, in violation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701. Iran has provided hundreds of millions of dollars in support to Hezbollah and has trained thousands of Hezbollah fighters at camps in Iran. Iran is also in violation of UNSCR 1747, which prohibits it from exporting arms and related materiel.

In 2009, U.N. Member States reported to the U.N.'s Iran Sanctions Committee three instances in which Iran was found to be transferring arms or related materiel to Syria, a regional hub for Iranian support to terrorist groups, including Hezbollah. While Hezbollah no longer maintains an overt militia presence in southern Lebanon, a result of Security Council Resolution 1701, it has strengthened its military infrastructure immediately north of the Litani River and in the Bekaa Valley since 2006.

Taking all of this into account, I do want to underscore our long-term goal in Lebanon, which Secretary Feltman has referred to, when it comes to mitigating the threat Hezbollah poses—establishing competent and accountable security forces that are responsible for monitoring and securing all of Lebanon's borders and, thus, undercutting Hezbollah's flawed justification that it maintains its arsenal to defend Lebanon.

Hezbollah's destabilizing actions have a global reach.

The recent conviction of a Hezbollah cell in Egypt for spying, plotting attacks on resorts frequented by tourists, and arms smuggling illustrates the group's growing ambitions. In Iraq, we are aware of Hezbollah providing training and other support to Shia militant groups that carry out attacks against coalition forces.

Hezbollah's web also extends to Europe and the Caucasus. For example, Hezbollah planned to attack the Israeli Embassy in Baku. While this attack was foiled and the perpetrators are now in an Azerbaijani prison, these actions illustrate the group's continued disregard for the rule of law, both inside and outside Lebanon.

We continue to urge all of our European partners, including the EU, to take further action against Hezbollah, to cease contact with the group and enact sanctions. We reject the argument that there is a difference between the group's military and political wings.

In the Western Hemisphere, Hezbollah has tapped into Muslim communities to raise funds. In June 2004, the United States Treasury Department designated Assad Ahmed Barakat, a Paraguayan, as a specially designated global terrorist under Executive Order 13224.

In December 2006, Treasury designated nine individuals and two business establishments as working in the Barakat financial network. In June 2008, the USG froze the United States assets of two Venezuelans for providing financial and other support to Hezbollah. We do note, however, that we have no credible information to indicate that Hezbollah has an operational presence in Latin America.

In addition to our efforts with Israel and the Lebanon security forces, we have taken numerous steps to erode Hezbollah's capabilities. Along with the State Department's designation of Hezbollah as a foreign terrorist organization, which dates to 1997, the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control has used Executive Order 13224 to bolster the U.S. Government's capability to target terrorists' financial networks.

A wide range of entities controlled by or affiliated with Hezbollah have been designated under the Executive order, including banks and financial front companies; Hezbollah-linked NGOs; Hezbollah's construction company, Jihad al-Bina; and specific individuals.

The United States has also taken action against Iranian entities that are involved in funding and supporting Hezbollah. In 2007, the United States Government designated, under Executive Order 13224, Iran's Quds force, a wing of Tehran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which has provided extensive support, equipment, and training to Hezbollah.

In 2007, the United States designated one of the largest Iranian state-owned banks, Bank Saderat, for transferring funds to Hezbollah and Palestinian rejectionist groups. Hezbollah has used Bank Saderat to transfer funds, sometimes in the millions of dollars, to support the activities of other terrorist organizations such as Hamas in Gaza.

The United States continues to take the threats posed by Hezbollah to it, Lebanon, and Israel, as well as the region at large, with the utmost seriousness. We are minimizing the threat and the influence of Hezbollah in the region by mounting considerable dip-

lomatic as well as counterterrorism capacity-building and assistance efforts.

Let me just say again how pleased I am that you are holding this hearing, and I very much look forward to your questions.

Senator CASEY. Thank both of you.

I will start with Ambassador Benjamin on some of the military aspects of this. In terms of firepower, comparing where they were, where Hezbollah was in the summer of 2006 in relationship to today, can you give us a sense of both the nature of the fire power, the rearming that they have done and, second, the reach capability?

And I think one thing that people in this country that we all lose sight of is what a small area in 2006 those rockets hit, such a small geographic area. I want you to give us a sense of that geography after the firepower analysis.

Ambassador BENJAMIN. Thank you for the question, Senator.

Hezbollah itself has said that it has some 40,000 rockets and missiles now, which I believe is significantly more than it had at the time that hostilities began in 2006. It has, of course, made these claims that I spoke about in my statement regarding hitting Ben-Gurion Airport.

Beyond that, Senator, I would have to say that we would need to talk about specific technical capabilities in a more classified setting. But I would also mention what Secretary Feltman referred to, which is the fact that Hezbollah is not right on the blue line in the way it was before, at least not with an overt militia presence.

And so, in that regard, its threat has been somewhat diminished. But nonetheless, this enormous arsenal that it speaks of is quite remarkable and, as you noted in your statement, far exceeds the kind of arsenal that most—the vast majority of countries in the world possess.

Senator CASEY. And I realize that a good bit of this you would have to speak of, or speak about, in a classified setting.

Tell us, if you can, what your sense is of the reach, as we know it from the public record, or have they made statements about the—you referred to Ben-Gurion Airport. What kind of a distance is that? I mean in a rough sense.

Ambassador BENJAMIN. I know the geography of Israel well, but I am not that great at measuring miles or kilometers in my brain. But I would imagine that it is—Jeff, you probably know this better than I do—120 miles?

Ambassador FELTMAN. That is about right.

Ambassador BENJAMIN. Yes. From the northern border to the airport. So, obviously, not a tremendous distance.

Senator CASEY. You said 120?

Ambassador BENJAMIN. That was my guess, yes.

Senator CASEY. And I realize these are estimates. I just want to give people a sense of the—a little bit of a sense of the geography.

Second, and I will get to some other questions in the second round, but as it relates to the question of how Lebanon can manage this kind of internal challenge that they have, where are they as it relates to the question of arming or not really arming, it is more training of their own armed forces? Where are they in the progression of that, if either of you can speak to that?

Ambassador BENJAMIN. Let me speak briefly on the issue of the Internal Security Forces, and then I will ask Secretary Feltman perhaps to speak to the LAF.

As you know, Senator, we have been engaging with the Internal Security Forces through the antiterrorism assistance training and through other programs to improve their capabilities. And when we did an assessment recently on their capabilities, we found that they had improved significantly and that this is a very positive story.

Having said that, I don't want to create any illusion that this is a force that is going to rid the country of Hezbollah any time very soon. But nonetheless, it has played a significant role, as you know, for example, in the case of the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp and continues to play an increasingly important role in domestic security.

Ambassador FELTMAN. And Chairman, the assistance program with the ISF and the assistance program with the LAF, while administered with different pots of money and by different people on our side, are linked. Because the LAF has traditionally done a lot of police work, and so by building up the ISF, the capability of the ISF, it allows the LAF——

Senator CASEY. Why don't you spell out those acronyms so that——

Ambassador FELTMAN. ISF is the Internal Security Forces. It is the police.

Senator CASEY. Right.

Ambassador FELTMAN. National police. Gendarmerie-type system, police system. The LAF are the Lebanese Armed Forces, which are the traditional army elements. And the LAF, over the years, had taken on police work, given weaknesses within the ISF. So by building up the ISF, as Ambassador Benjamin was describing, the LAF is able to concentrate more on core missions such as counterterrorism, securing the country, things like that.

We have—you referred to some of the figures yourself, that since 2006, we have provided to the LAF, the Lebanese Armed Forces, about $630 million in training, equipment, and so forth. This includes basic equipment, such as vehicles, communications gear, weapons, ammunition. It also includes some heavy weaponry like tanks and artillery to the LAF.

I would note in this regard that the LAF has maintained an exemplary end-use record. They have 100 percent compliance with end-use monitoring, with the requirements on which we put the LAF equipment. We have a comprehensive training program to reshape and professionalize the LAF, also working with the LAF to develop a long-term strategy based on quantifiable milestones.

The thing that is important to remember about the LAF is this is the national institution in which all Lebanese have sort of bestowed their national aspirations. I think we all know from watching Lebanon over the years that there is a weak state structure in general, that there have been divisions that, in some cases, turned violent such as during the civil war with loyalties for political leaders or community leaders, what you might even describe as feudal-type leaders.

But the LAF is the one institution that has transcended those differences. It is essentially a symbol for the Lebanese state that

the Lebanese people would all like to have. So there is not only the security motivation behind support to the Lebanese Armed Forces, there is more of a national state-building aspect to this as well.

In terms of measuring success, I will give you an odd measure right now. There has been an attack, particularly on the assistance to the ISF, by Hezbollah, Hezbollah's allies, Hezbollah-associated media, basically coming out in strong force saying what is this? What is the United States doing with the ISF? This is all something very, very nefarious. When all it is, is we are doing is building a credible national police force.

But if Hezbollah media, Hezbollah political organs are so threatened by what we are doing with the ISF, I have to say what we are doing must be pretty good in helping contribute to the national police force.

Senator CASEY. Thank you.

Senator Risch.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like your opinions or views on the following. We all know that the state of Israel has been firm in its determination to defend itself and, as such, will act when provoked to take military action. And I think alongside that and parallel to it, all of us and I think a number of people on this committee have seen the intelligence reports about the buildup of arms to Hezbollah, and we are not disclosing anything because this has all been—a lot of it has been reported in the media. So I think it is a fact that everyone can accept that there is substantial buildup of arms with Hezbollah since the 2006 war.

Israel in the past has, before they have taken action, usually verbalized or articulated its concern regarding a given situation. And lately, we have been hearing Israel verbalize that it has growing concerns about the buildup of arms immediately on its northern border. What is your opinion or your thoughts, each of you, on the likelihood of Israel taking action, given the buildup and given the fact that the buildup continues?

You know, the world listens and watches these things and then, when Israel takes action, wrings its hands about what they have done when there were usually pretty decent warning signs that there was something going to happen. And I am starting to get a feeling that there is growing concern reaching some type of critical mass regarding the buildup of these arms. I would like your thoughts on that.

Ambassador FELTMAN. Senator Risch, let me make a couple of comments. And of course, the first one is the United States stands with Israel's right to defend itself. It is a principle of our foreign and security policy.

We are, in fact, working with the Israelis to enhance their security capabilities against the type of threat that Hezbollah missiles pose, and we appreciate the support of the Senate, of this committee, for example, for the assistance to help Israel with its Iron Dome capability, where Israel is planning to deploy 12 new countermissile batteries under its Iron Dome. So the first principle is we support Israel's right to defend itself.

Second thing is Israel, as you know, is going to make its own decisions based on its own sovereign interests, its own risk calcula-

tion. They don't turn to us or look to us for agreement, approval, or anything. They are going to make their decision.

Senator RISCH. So where do you think they are right now?

Ambassador FELTMAN. Well, I will tell you where we are. Where we are I feel on more comfortable ground. We have been passing the message to the Syrians, to the people in Lebanon about the real risks that continued transfer of sophisticated weaponry to Hezbollah puts Lebanon and the region beyond.

And I know that Senator Corker was just in Damascus himself. I suspect your message was similar to ours about these risks because we are using all channels that we can in order to get the message out about how dangerous the situation is of these continued transfers of weaponry to Hezbollah. So that is where we are.

Senator RISCH. But you know some members of this committee have done exactly that. We met with the Lebanese here within the last couple few weeks and delivered that message. I have to tell you, from a personal standpoint, that I was not—they get it. They understand it. But I was not comforted with the response I got as far as what they thought they could do about it.

Thus, the question about what are the Israelis going to do about it.

Ambassador FELTMAN. On the dilemma you pose is one that we have to think about a lot, which is that there are forces affecting Lebanon that are bigger than Lebanon, that are bigger than the Lebanese to manage by themselves. And it seems to me that the best thing that we can do, as the United States, is to try to calm the neighborhood that, frankly, the neighborhood in which Lebanon gets routinely mugged.

And this is one reason why we are committed to getting to a comprehensive peace, a peace that includes Syria, a peace that will address these questions once and for all. The question we have before us now is how do we manage the situation in the meantime, between that comprehensive peace that Syria says it wants, that would solve the issues of these arms transfers once and for all, and now?

And I don't have much insights into what the Israelis are thinking, but I know that they are concerned. They raise their concerns with us.

Senator RISCH. Dan.

Ambassador BENJAMIN. Senator Risch, I don't have much to add to what Secretary Feltman said. We have been hearing the same things you have heard. I am going to be in Israel next week and look forward to discussing exactly these issues with the Israelis. It is clearly a situation of significant tension and of great concern to us.

And we have, as Secretary Feltman said, been warning everyone in the region. I was in Damascus in March. We have been warning everyone about the dangers of miscalculation and the dangers associated with the transfer of sophisticated technologies and weaponry, and I would be happy to report back to you when I am back.

Senator RISCH. I want to thank both of you for that analysis.

Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Senator Risch.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for holding this hearing. I think it is very timely and appreciate both of your being here to testify.

Ambassador Feltman, you talked about the experience over the last several years that the Lebanese people rejecting Hezbollah on a number of occasions when there were efforts to really grandstand by Hezbollah in Lebanon. So where do you think—is Hezbollah popular now among the Lebanese people, and are there particular sects in Lebanon that support Hezbollah more than others?

And if so, where does Hezbollah get its popularity? Is it from intimidation, or is it from groups that truly believe in the message that Hezbollah seems to be delivering?

Ambassador FELTMAN. Senator, thanks for the question, giving me the opportunity to offer my insights based on what I saw when I was Ambassador there for 3½ years.

First of all, Hezbollah does have genuine grassroots popular support, without question. We may not like it, but we can't deny it that Hezbollah has been able to tap into the Lebanese political system, a divided Lebanese political system based on community loyalty and also provide some social services to a neglected part of the population. Iranian-funded social services we could say, but they have been very effective in doing this.

But the point I was trying to make is there are limits. This is not a question where suddenly Hezbollah's ideology is going to be welcomed across Lebanese society, across all of Lebanon. So Hassan Nasrallah seems to be a true believer, a true believer in the Khomeini-style Iranian revolutionary rhetoric. That seems to be what Hassan Nasrallah—what motivates him.

I think all of us know a lot of Lebanese, and you know that that is not a way that you would characterize all the Lebanese. It is an extremely sophisticated, cosmopolitan population with traditional ties across the region, across the world. And an Iranian-style, revolutionary, Shia-based ideology is not going to have universal appeal in Lebanon.

So what you have is you have strong support for Hezbollah based in the Shia community, particularly based in the neglected parts of the Shia population. And then you have political alliances that are based on perceived mutual interests, and you have political accommodation that is based on the reality that Hezbollah is powerful, has a militia, is backed by Syria, is backed by Iran.

But when you look at the election results for the municipal elections, for syndicate elections, for student elections, and even for parliamentary elections last year, you do see these limitations. You see erosion in the support of the allies that stood with Hezbollah, the allies that thought Hezbollah was their—the non-Shia allies that thought that Hezbollah was going to be their ticket to power. You see erosion in this.

And it is what I think should inspire us that no matter how hard the task is in Lebanon to keep engaged, to maintain our support for Lebanon state institutions, to provide alternatives to the vision that Hezbollah has painted because it is not a natural vision that all Lebanese are going to subscribe to.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. I think that is a good analysis. I appreciate that.

I was, I am sure, among many people here who were very pleased to see the strength of the Hariri election last year and the new government be formed and do recognize that the government faces real challenges in dealing with Hezbollah. Are there more or are there ways in which the government could better undermine Hezbollah's arguments to the public and encourage them to abandon violence and to really move in ways that are more productive to the future of Lebanon?

Ambassador FELTMAN. I think that to the extent that the state can deliver services, if the state can create economic growth. And in fact, Lebanon is having something like 8 percent economic growth last year, and they are predicting to have 4 to 8 percent this year. To the extent that these sorts of factors continue, you maintain an alternative vision to the vision that Hezbollah is painting.

Now Hezbollah is in the government. They were in the government by invitation. The Lebanese are looking for consensus, a national unity government that can try to transcend some of the differences that have been so dangerous to Lebanon in the past.

So I don't see the government itself as saying we are going to adopt policies that are confronting Hezbollah. That is not the question. The question is can the government provide the type of services that build a national allegiance to the state that transcends all of these boundaries?

You know, Hassan Nasrallah probably would be willing to fight to the last Lebanese, fight Israel, fight for Iran, for the last Lebanese. But I am not sure that every Lebanese would be willing to fight for Khomeini-style revolution to the last Lebanese. And so, the state can embody the aspirations of the Lebanese for their nation with proper support, working to build national institutions, such as the police and such as the army.

But again, I go back to something I said to Ranking Member Risch in that I think our responsibility is, first of all, to show support for nonsectarian national institutions like the army, but also to work to calm the region, the region whose forces have so affected Lebanon so many times in a very negative way.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. I have other questions, but I am about out of time.

So thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Senator Corker.

Senator CORKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you both for your testimony and service. And Secretary Feltman, as you mentioned, I was in Beirut and Damascus this last week and certainly support the right of Israel to defend itself strongly, like most Americans do, and certainly denounce any kind of terrorist activity that any organization might provide.

I will say that on the ground in Lebanon one would get a very different picture as it relates to how people view Hezbollah. Among business people in Lebanon, which basically generally don't pay a bit of attention to the Lebanese Government because of the lack of ability of the Lebanese Government to really do much that is very effective, they don't really view Hezbollah as a threat. And it is amazing to see the support that people have there on the ground

for what they do in their eyes—I am just repeating them, not my own position—but in their eyes to really defend Israeli aggression.

And just it is a huge disconnect between what you are saying here and what I think one might pick up on the ground. I wonder if you wanted to expand on that at all?

Ambassador FELTMAN. At a political level, Lebanon is deeply divided, and that is reflected time and time again. And so, I am not surprised when the business class, is a class I know well from the 3½ years that I spent there, makes their accommodations with this reality of a divided political class and the reality of a region that hasn't always been friendly to Lebanon. In fact, usually hasn't been friendly to Lebanon.

The Lebanese are very talented in their entrepreneurial and business abilities. They are able to work in this. So I am not surprised to see accommodation by the business community to these divisions, and I am also not——

Senator CORKER. I think it is more than accommodation. I think they are glad that they are there, do not consider them to be a nuisance, and actually consider them to be the only real defense against their perceived possibility of Israeli aggression. So I think it is more than accommodation.

Ambassador FELTMAN. And I also am not surprised if they see the need for Lebanon to have a deterrent. Look how many times Lebanon has ended up in some kind of war over the years.

But it is not—that support that you heard, Senator, isn't being reflected in syndicate elections, in union elections, in student elections——

Senator CORKER. I am talking about strictly as a defense mechanism. I agree with you on the political side. But as a defense mechanism, I think it is viewed very differently than is being outlined today by many on the ground.

Ambassador FELTMAN. But there is something interesting, which the time when I was in Lebanon I tried to point out to some of my friends and contacts, which is at one level Hezbollah is creating the conditions that then serve to create the threat that then give Hezbollah the justification for its arms.

Let me use one example, the Israeli overflights. I know very well how much the Lebanese are bothered. They feel their national sovereignty is insulted. They are in some cases worried about the Israeli overflights. And these are things that the U.N. Security Council has heard from a number of U.N. representatives are a violation of various Security Council resolutions.

But it would be a heck of a lot easier for us, as friends of Israel, as supporters of Israel's right to defend itself, to make the case to Israel you need to stop those overflights if there weren't arms smuggling. There is a direct linkage between the arms smuggling, the arms transfers that Hezbollah is engaged in and those Israeli overflights.

So Hezbollah uses the overflights to say, look, you need us. You need us to defend Lebanon against these overflights. But they are creating the very conditions by which those overflights occur.

Senator CORKER. Yes. It is interesting. On the ground, again, I think right before the municipal elections in the south, there were those overflights. And some of the Lebanese have a totally different

point of view as to why those overflights take place, which I won't speak about at this moment.

Let me ask you the relationship between Syria and Lebanon obviously is very important as it relates to Hezbollah and as it relates to just relations overall. It looks to me like Hariri has made a couple of trips in recently to see Assad. And even though his father had been killed, I guess that is in the past, and there have been suspects in Syria about that, it looks like that is warming tremendously. And I wonder if that relationship warming over time might change the dynamic that exists with Hezbollah in southern Lebanon?

Ambassador FELTMAN. I mean, our position, Senator, is that Lebanon and Syria should have a positive relationship, that there should be good relations between Syria and Lebanon. That when Syria and Lebanon have had bad relations that it has been bad for Lebanon.

But it is a relationship that needs to be built on mutual respect, that needs to be based on the idea you don't interfere in the sovereignty of the other country. So to the extent that Prime Minister Hariri or President Suleiman are developing that type of relationship with their Syrian counterparts, we would welcome it.

There is family, history, trade, all sorts of ties between Syria and Lebanon. It is natural they should have a good relationship. The trouble that has happened too many times in the past, though, is that that relationship has been very much dominated by one side interfering in the other. So, to the extent that they are building a new type of relationship, that is great.

Senator CORKER. And again, just to ask some contrarian types of questions, I know that Ambassador Crocker is going to testify afterward. I am not sure I am going to be here for that. I noticed one of the four things that he recommends—in addition to one of the things you mentioned, having an Ambassador to Syria. He recommended that we engage Hezbollah.

And of course, maybe it is easy for him to say now that he is retired, to be able to say that kind of thing. But I wondered what your reaction might be to that?

Ambassador FELTMAN. You know, our policy is for not engaging with Hezbollah for all the reasons you know. And I don't anticipate that policy changing. Hezbollah, to the extent that Hezbollah would evolve into a normal part of the political fabric in Lebanon, and Hezbollah would, in fact, win significant political support even without its arms.

To the extent that they would play by the rules, act like a normal political force in Lebanon, I think that we could probably rethink our own policy. But for the current situation, as long as Hezbollah is maintaining militia, is undertaking activities in the region and beyond that basically are terrorist activities, we are not engaging with them.

Senator CORKER. Well, I thank you both for your service, and Mr. Benjamin, I am sorry we didn't have any questions. But maybe here a little bit later.

Thank you.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Senator Corker.

I know we have a little more time in this panel, maybe 5 minutes. I am trying to stick to our 1 hour, and I won't dominate the remaining time because I know that others may have questions. But I wanted to raise one question I think I would be delinquent if I didn't ask about this. I meant to ask earlier, and it could be for either, but I wanted to get your reaction.

This is a Reuters story of May 18, and I will just read the first—I don't want to take it out of context. So I will read the lead of the story. It says, and I am quoting, "The Obama administration is looking for ways to build up 'moderate elements' within the Lebanese Hezbollah guerrilla movement and to diminish the influence of hard-liners, a top White House official said on Tuesday. John Brennan, Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, met with Lebanese leaders during a recent visit."

And it goes on from there. I think it—I haven't seen much analysis of that. I wanted to get your sense of what the intent of that statement was and what, if anything, is being done to effectuate that, if that is the policy of this administration?

Ambassador BENJAMIN. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Brennan, who spent a career in the intelligence community, may have made an analytic statement about what is going on in Lebanese politics. But I think that this story itself distorts the sense of his remarks, and I would just say that the policy has not changed regarding Hezbollah or contacts with Hezbollah. We do not distinguish between a political wing and a military wing. We do not, to echo what Secretary Feltman said a moment ago, think that there is any room right now for engagement with Hezbollah.

And I would just add to what he said before and to Senator Corker's question that I think it would be enormously damaging to our broader counterterrorism policy if we were to change course on Hezbollah in a way that we have not changed with Hamas or any number of other groups that do not play by the rules, that embrace violence against innocents as a matter of course, and that pose a threat to key regional allies. I just think that this would be very, very damaging to what it is we are trying to achieve in counterterrorism.

Senator CASEY. And Ambassador Feltman, do you have anything to add to that? I would hope that that is reiterated and repeated.

Well, one final question before we wrap up and I turn to our colleagues for their final questions for this panel. The budget question, the $136 million. I guess there are a couple of questions there. No. 1, how do you assess that in terms of the impact? How will it be spent, No. 1?

No. 2 is the question or the concern, I should say, about whether or not we are confident that those dollars can't find their way unwittingly or unintentionally, but find their way into somehow helping Hezbollah? What is your sense of that, or what can you tell us to assure us that that is not the case?

Ambassador FELTMAN. Let me say a couple of things. First, as I mentioned earlier, the LAF has a perfect record. The Lebanese Armed Forces have a perfect record of accountability for the equipment that we have provided, which includes agreement on use,

end-use monitoring, physical inventories. They have an exemplary record.

In terms of our assistance program more broadly, when we are talking about ESF, NADR funds, some DRL funds, et cetera, we have a lot of steps in place to make sure that we are complying with U.S. law as well as U.S. policy in terms of guarding against the use of funds, materials, et cetera, benefiting Hezbollah or other prescribed organizations.

You ask a broader question, which is basically are the levels of what we are asking for appropriate for the task? And I will say that one always has to balance policy priorities with resources, but I think that we are doing a pretty good job. There was a joint—United States-Lebanon joint military commission here back in February during the blizzard. Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Murr was able to have meetings with his counterparts at DOD, and there was basically agreement for assuming appropriations, a $200 million 2-year program to build up the LAF's special forces on counterterrorism.

The LAF has proven its political willingness to go after elements of Sunni extremism, Sunni terrorism in Lebanon, and so we have agreed to help build up their special operations forces on that counterterrorism, which I think is appropriate and will be welcomed across all of Lebanon. But we are not the only players in town. It is worth remembering that there is also other support coming in for Lebanon's independent institutions—Saudi, UAE, Jordanian, French. So we are using our assistance I think wisely but are mindful of the fact that others have resources they can bring as well.

Senator CASEY. Thank you very much.

Unless Senator Shaheen, Senator Corker, or Senator Risch.

Senator SHAHEEN. I have a question.

Senator CASEY. OK. Sure.

Senator SHAHEEN. I think this may be for you, Mr. Benjamin. Do we—and I don't know if this is public information or not. But do we have estimates about the current size of Hezbollah, both in Lebanon and in terms of the numbers of operatives they are supporting around the world?

Ambassador BENJAMIN. I think we have estimates for the number of actual men under arms in Lebanon, and it is in the several thousands. In terms of operatives around the world, I don't think we have any numbers that we could discuss in this setting. I think that we also would have to distinguish between those who are engaged in fundraising activities and those who are actual terrorists, those who would be prepared to carry out violent actions.

And additionally, when we are talking about Lebanon, we would have to come up with some discussion, some assessment of how many people are actually involved in the organization, involved in their social services provision and the like. So I think it is a fairly complicated picture, but in terms of those who are under arms in Lebanon—5,000, 4,000 is the standard? Am I correct, Jeff?

Ambassador FELTMAN. I would guess higher, but I don't know.

Ambassador BENJAMIN. You would guess higher.

Senator SHAHEEN. Yes, I think I am really asking about those who we think are involved in terrorist activities directly.

Ambassador FELTMAN. Yes, I don't think that we could give you an estimate in this setting on global activities if you were to take into account Iraq, for example, people training in Iran and the like. But we would be happy to follow up with you on that.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Senator CASEY. Well, thanks very much to both of you. We appreciate your time and testimony. If we have further questions for the record, we will submit them to you, and we are grateful for your testimony. And we will move to our second panel.

Just for purposes of review, for the second panel, we will try to keep statements to 5 to 7 minutes. Your entire statements, of course, will be made part of the record. And I think we will probably start with—we will start with Ambassador Crocker, if that is OK? And we will just go right to left.

So we will begin the second panel. As I said before, we would try to keep each to an hour. We are doing pretty well so far.

And Ambassador Crocker, could we start with you, if you don't mind? We are grateful for each of you taking the time to be here. I know that all of you had to travel, one way or the other, some from as far away as Boston and Texas, I guess.

Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

STATEMENT OF HON. RYAN C. CROCKER, DEAN AND EXECUTIVE PROFESSOR, GEORGE BUSH SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICE, TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE STATION, TX

Ambassador CROCKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee.

I have had the honor many times in the past to appear before this committee as a member of various administrations. Now I am honestly able to say it is also a pleasure. [Laughter.]

We are here today to discuss Hezbollah, its strength, its supporters, and the challenges it poses to vital U.S. interests in the region. While our focus today is on the Middle East, it is worth recalling that Hezbollah is a global network with capabilities in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

For more than a quarter of a century, Hezbollah and its sponsors have targeted the United States and its allies. I have been a witness to much of it. I was present in Lebanon when Hezbollah was created in the aftermath of the 1982 Israeli invasion. I was there during the bombings of the Embassy and the Marine Barracks the following year.

I was back in Lebanon as Ambassador when Hezbollah entered Parliament in the 1992 elections following the assassination of Abbas Musawi earlier that year. I was Ambassador to Syria when a triumphant Hezbollah emerged ascendant in south Lebanon in 2000, and I was present, physically present, when Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah led a delegation to Damascus to confer legitimacy on Bashar al-Assad in the wake of his father's death that same summer. And it is worth recalling that episode when we look back at the recent meeting that Bashar al-Assad hosted in Damascus of Ahmadinejad of Iran and Hassan Nasrallah. As Ambassador to Iraq, I saw the evidence of Hezbollah's involvement in the training of Shia extremists under Iranian sponsorship.

Hezbollah is both an indigenous Lebanese organization and a proxy for Syria and Iran. Iran has always seen itself as a regional power, capable of projecting force beyond its borders. The shah did so with conventional forces, his army in the Arabian Peninsula in the early 1970s at the same time his navy seized three islands from the United Arab Emirates.

The creation of Hezbollah in Lebanon, just 3 years after the revolution in Tehran, allowed the Islamic Republic to continue to project power in Iranian imperial tradition, albeit by unconventional rather than conventional means. For Syria, the establishment of an ideologically motivated terrorist organization provided an instrument whereby Damascus could continue its campaign in Lebanon against Israel and the United States following the utter rout of its conventional forces in 1982.

And for both Iran and Syria, it was another important element in a strategic partnership forged in the wake of Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iran in 1980 when Syria became the only Arab State to side with Tehran. That strategic partnership is alive and well today not only in Lebanon. We saw it at work in Iraq during the period I was there, with Iran arming and training Shia militias in coordination with Hezbollah while Syria supported al-Qaeda and Sunni insurgents.

In essence, they were following the Lebanon game plan of the 1980s. It almost succeeded, but the surge and the determination of the Iraqis themselves confounded the effort, at least for the time being.

And the partnership in Lebanon with Hezbollah continues. Weapons of increasing sophistication and lethality originate from Iran and are delivered through Syria, as they have been for two and a half decades.

But it would not be correct to see Hezbollah only as a puppet manipulated through Tehran and Damascus. The organization is strongly rooted in Lebanon's own Shia Arab history. Over the years, Hezbollah has expanded its capabilities and reach at every level, as you noted, politically, socially, and militarily.

The 2006 conflict with Israel I think demonstrated that the threat posed by Hezbollah cannot be eliminated by military means alone. The recent improvement in Syrian-Saudi relations have strengthened the hand of Damascus in Lebanon and of Hezbollah as recent pressures on Prime Minister Hariri indicate. But neither Hezbollah nor its backers have a completely free hand, and there are opportunities as well as challenges.

I have four suggestions. First, work to strengthen the Lebanese state and especially the Lebanese Armed Forces. The Lebanese Armed Forces emerged from the turmoil of the civil war as an increasingly capable and professional force.

We need to be realistic. I do not think the Lebanese Armed Forces will take on Hezbollah militarily, now or in the future, but a strong and capable Lebanese Armed Forces could, over time, change the thinking of Hezbollah's core constituency. If the LAF is broadly seen by Lebanese Shia, including supporters of Hezbollah, as a competent and impartial force, the current strong support for an extra-legal militia may shift.

A corollary, and this is my second point, is a concerted Lebanese government effort, with foreign assistance, to improve economic and social conditions in Shia areas. Shia mistrust of the state is rooted in generations of alienation fostered by a sense of economic marginalization and neglect. Much of Hezbollah's strength is the product of the state's weakness.

Taken together, these two initiatives could bring about a recalculation by the Shia of the relative costs and benefits of an ongoing state of military confrontation with Israel. At present, the benefits are perceived as far outweighing the costs. And I certainly had the same impression, Senator Corker, from my contacts in Lebanon as you derived from your visit. It goes beyond the Shia community.

My third point is the one you mentioned. We should talk to Hezbollah. One thing I learned in my time in Iraq is that engagement can be extremely valuable in ending an insurgency. Sometimes persuasion and negotiation change minds. But in any case, we would learn far more about the organization than we know now—personalities, differences, points of weakness. Simply put, we cannot mess with our adversary's mind if we are not talking to him.

This does not need to be styled as a dramatic change in policy, simply a matter of fact engagement with those who hold official positions as Members of Parliament or the Cabinet. Hezbollah is a part of the Lebanese political landscape, and I think we should deal with it, again not with a view of finding the moderates or the pragmatists. I am not sure there are any. But as we were able to do in Iraq, we can find differences and divisions that can be exploited.

For the same reasons, we should step up our engagement with Syria. Sending an ambassador, in my view, is not a concession. It improves our access, expands our understanding, allows us to identify potential weaknesses and differences including between Damascus and Tehran. In short, it would be to our advantage, not theirs.

I know Robert Ford well, and he is the ideal individual for a job I once held. He is fluent in Arabic. And with more than 3 years in Iraq since 2003, he is no stranger to tough assignments and tough people.

Mr. Chairman, these are not magic bullets. Those don't exist. But over time, such efforts can make a difference. Syria and Iran have demonstrated a capacity for strategic patience and a long game in Lebanon, playing a weak hand to advantage. It is important that we make and sustain long-term commitments of our own and that we engage with adversaries as well as allies.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Crocker follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. RYAN C. CROCKER, DEAN AND EXECUTIVE PROFESSOR, GEORGE BUSH SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICE, TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE STATION, TX

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss Hezbollah, its strength, its supporters, and the challenges it poses to vital U.S. interests in the region. These are critical issues for our country, and the committee is to be commended for raising them. While our focus today is on the Middle East, it is worth recalling that Hezbollah is a global network that also has capabilities in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

For more than a quarter of a century, Hezbollah and its sponsors have targeted the United States and its allies. I have been a witness to much of it. I was present in Lebanon when Hezbollah was created in the aftermath of the 1982 Israeli invasion. I was there during the bombings of the Embassy and the Marine Barracks the following year. I was back in Lebanon as Ambassador when Hezbollah entered Parliament in the 1992 elections following the assassination of Abbas Musawi earlier that year. I was Ambassador to Syria when a triumphant Hezbollah emerged ascendant in South Lebanon in 2000, and I was present when Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah led a delegation to Damascus to confer legitimacy on Bashar al-Asad in the wake of his father's death that same summer. And as Ambassador to Iraq, I saw the evidence of Hezbollah's involvement in the training of Shia extremists under Iranian sponsorship.

Hezbollah is both an indigenous Lebanese organization and a proxy for Syria and Iran. It draws heavily for its legitimacy on deeply rooted themes of resistance and martyrdom in Shia Islam, what scholars such as Dr. Rola al-Hosseini call the Karbala Paradigm. This refers to the death of the Imam Hossein and his followers at the hands of an Umayyad army near the Iraqi city of Karbala in Islam's first century. For the Shia, it is the defining event in their history. In Hezbollah's contemporary narrative, we and Israel are cast in the role of the Umayyads—it is a compelling image for the lower class youth who are the core of Hezbollah's support.

For Iran and Syria, Hezbollah has been a valuable proxy. Iran has always seen itself as a regional power, capable of projecting power beyond its borders. The Shah did so with conventional forces. His army was deployed in the Arabian Peninsula in the 1970s, and his navy seized three islands from the United Arab Emirates at the same time. The creation of Hezbollah in Lebanon, just 3 years after the revolution in Tehran, allowed the Islamic Republic to continue to project power in Iranian imperial tradition albeit by unconventional rather than conventional means.

For Syria, the establishment of an ideologically motivated terrorist organization provided an instrument whereby Damascus could continue its campaign in Lebanon against Israel and the United States following the utter rout of its conventional forces at the hands of the Israelis in 1982. And for both Iran and Syria, it was another important element in a strategic partnership forged in the wake of Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iran in 1980 when Syria became the only Arab State to side with Tehran.

That strategic partnership is alive and well today. We saw it at work in Iraq during the period I was there, with Iran arming and training Shia militias in coordination with Hezbollah while Syria supported al-Qaeda and Sunni insurgents. In essence, they were following the Lebanon game plan of the 1980s. It almost succeeded, but the surge and the determination of the Iraqis themselves confounded the effort, at least for the time being. And the partnership in Lebanon with Hezbollah continues. Weapons of increasing sophistication and lethality originate from Iran, and are delivered through Syria as they have been for two and a half decades.

But it would not be correct to see Hezbollah as a puppet manipulated through Tehran and Damascus. The organization is strongly rooted in Lebanon's own Shia Arab history. It is worth recalling that South Lebanon (known as Jabal Amel) flourished as a center of scholarship and culture in the Middle Ages. After the establishment of the Safavid Empire at the beginning of the 16th century, Iran's first Shia dynasty, the ulama of Jabal Amel advised the new rulers on the structure and principles of a Shia state. Hezbollah styles itself as the heir to that tradition.

Over the years, Hezbollah has expanded its capabilities and reach at every level—politically, socially, and militarily. The 2006 conflict with Israel demonstrated that the threat posed by Hezbollah cannot be eliminated by military means. The recent improvement in Syrian-Saudi relations have strengthened the hand of Damascus in Lebanon, and strengthened Hezbollah as recent pressures on Prime Minister Hariri indicate. But neither Hezbollah nor its backers have a free hand, and there are opportunities as well as challenges. As we consider our options, I suggest we move in the following directions.

- Work to strengthen the Lebanese state, and especially the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). The LAF has emerged from the turmoil of the civil war as an increasingly capable and professional force. I do not think it is realistic to expect the LAF to take on Hezbollah militarily, now or in the future. But a strong and engaged Lebanese army could over time change the thinking of Hezbollah's constituency. If the LAF is broadly seen by Lebanese Shia, including supporters of Hezbollah, as a competent and impartial force, the current strong support for an extra-legal militia may shift.
- A corollary is a concerted Lebanese Government effort, with foreign assistance, to improve economic and social conditions in Shia areas. Shia mistrust of the

state is rooted in generations of alienation fostered by a sense of economic marginalization and neglect. Much of Hezbollah's strength is the product of the state's weakness. Taken together, these two initiatives could bring about a recalculation by the Shia of the relative costs and benefits of an ongoing state of military confrontation with Israel. At present, the benefits are perceived as far outweighing the costs.

- We should talk to Hezbollah. One thing I learned in Iraq is that engagement can be extremely valuable in ending an insurgency. Sometimes persuasion and negotiation change minds. But in any case we would learn far more about the organization than we know now—personalities, differences, points of weakness. We cannot mess with our adversary's mind if we are not talking to him. This does not need to be styled as a dramatic change in policy; simply a matter of fact engagement with those who hold official positions as Members of Parliament or the Cabinet. Hezbollah is a part of the Lebanese political landscape, and we should deal with it directly.
- For the same reasons, we should step up our engagement with Syria. Sending an ambassador is not a concession. It improves our access, expands our understanding, allows us to identify potential weaknesses and differences including between Damascus and Tehran—in short it would be to our advantage, not theirs. I know Robert Ford well, and he is the ideal individual for a job I once held. He is fluent in Arabic, and with more than 3 years in Iraq since 2003, no stranger to tough assignments and tough people.

Mr. Chairman, these are not magic bullets. There are none in this campaign. But over time, such efforts can make a difference. Syria and Iran have demonstrated a capacity for strategic patience and a long game in Lebanon, transforming a weak hand to a strong one. It is important that we sustain long term commitments of our own.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Ambassador Crocker.

Ms. Pletka.

STATEMENT OF DANIELLE PLETKA, VICE PRESIDENT, FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICY STUDIES, AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE, WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. PLETKA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee.

At the outset, as you mentioned, Mr. Chairman, let me say that I spent more than a decade—I am loath to admit that—working on the subject of today's hearing as a staff member for this committee, and I am a little bit more accustomed to sitting behind you than I am sitting in front of you.

But I am very grateful for this invitation to testify today not just because it feels like a homecoming for me, but more importantly, because I know from personal experience the important role that this committee can play in addressing this and so many other vital issues.

Despite a heightened awareness of terrorism and terrorist groups since 9/11, American policy toward Lebanon, Syria, and Hezbollah remains, I believe, confused—a mass of mixed signals and inconsistent approaches.

Despite more than $1.6 billion—and we have mentioned some of the component parts of that aid, but we haven't added it all up—more than $1.6 billion in economic and military assistance to Lebanon since FY06, that includes next year's request—both the Obama administration and the previous administration have very little to show for their efforts in the Levant.

In the wake of the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri in 2005—a murder, by the way, we haven't stated this explicitly, but certainly Hezbollah is suspected to have been involved in that by the United Nations tribunal investigating that

murder—the international community took a relatively hard line against Syria and its proxies. And the resulting end to the Syrian military domination of Lebanon gave many of us hope that Lebanon was at last on track to regain the independence it lost in 1976.

In the years that followed, there were a lot of troublesome developments that should only have fueled our commitment to helping Lebanon protect itself from Syrian and Iranian predations. The 2006 war that we have talked about and, worst still, Hezbollah's performance in that conflict revealed what some in Israel and the United States had dismissed as a ragtag group of terrorists was, in fact, a sophisticated, well-trained, and as we have mentioned, very well-armed fighting machine.

The subsequent passage of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701 and its call for, and I quote, "no weapons without the consent of the Government of Lebanon and no authority other than that of the Government of Lebanon" appeared to be a silver lining to the summer war, much as the aftermath of the Hariri murder led to the withdrawal of Syrian troops. But the resolution has been all but ignored.

Iran and Syria continued to rearm Hezbollah, and Hezbollah is now significantly better armed than it was in 2006. As you mentioned, as Secretary Gates has said, Hezbollah has far more rockets—and I am quoting here—"more rockets and missiles than most governments in the world." I provided you with an estimated list of some of their weaponry based on open sources, and it is impressive, indeed.

Let me just list a couple of things for you that are developments that we have reported on our Iran Tracker Web site at AEI in the last 6 months alone. The Times of London reported that Israeli and American officials believe Syria transferred two Scud missiles to Lebanon, where they are suspected to be in an underground storage facility in the Bekaa Valley. Hezbollah sources told a Kuwaiti paper that the group now has the capability to launch 15 tons of explosives at Israel every day in the case of another war.

Arms seized from a cargo plane in Bangkok late last year were destined for Hezbollah and Hamas. And Thai authorities said that the plane, with weapons that were sourced in North Korea, was carrying 35 tons of weaponry, including rockets and RPGs.

Reports in May suggested that Syria supplied Hezbollah with M600 missiles. That would allow Hezbollah to hit Tel Aviv from southern Lebanon. That is, by the way, about 60 miles, not even 120.

In January, which was an extraordinarily busy month for that relationship, Hezbollah placed long-range rockets deep into Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley. The Israeli Navy seized an Iranian ship en route to Syria, carrying weapons destined for Hezbollah from Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. Kuwaiti papers reported a United States official saying Hezbollah operatives were training on SA2 antiaircraft missile batteries in Syria, and U.N. peacekeepers uncovered 660 pounds of explosive devices near the border with Israel.

It is a pretty amazing list just from the last few months alone. In short, Hezbollah is effectively a state within a state in Lebanon,

with an ever growing and ever more sophisticated long-range arsenal. It is untrammeled by the Lebanese Government to which it belongs and answerable to no one in that nation, but rather to the dictatorships in Damascus and in Tehran.

Sadly, hopes that Lebanese leaders answerable to the Lebanese people—and not to foreign powers—would regain control have not been realized. And there was no more poignant symbol of that failure than the fact that as Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri was meeting with our own President Obama and his team, Lebanese President Michel Suleiman appeared on Hezbollah's Al Manar television station, praising Hezbollah and reportedly, and I quote, "calling on all Lebanese to embrace and protect Hezbollah's arms."

According to the Pentagon, Hezbollah receives up to $200 million in subsidies from Iran each year, in addition to its weaponry. They also raise money here in the United States, and there have been several arrests of Hezbollah fundraisers and supporters here, including an arrest in Ohio last week.

Hezbollah also receives training from the elite Quds Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and, in turn, provides training to a variety of groups at its bases in Lebanon. The Pentagon reported in April that "Lebanese Hezbollah has trained Iraqi insurgents in Iraq, Iran, and Lebanon, providing them with the training, tactics, technology to conduct kidnappings, small unit tactical operations, and employ sophisticated improvised explosive devices—IEDs—incorporating lessons learned from operations in southern Lebanon."

That was all a quotation from the Pentagon report. In short, Hezbollah is capable of waging war on its own behalf, has a wide network around the world, has operational alliances with other terrorist groups, and affords Iran the opportunity to open a second front in any conflict. And it is able to do all of that behind the facade of "national resistance" in Lebanon.

What that means for Lebanon is continued erosion of the state, subjugation to foreign interests, a loss of independent will and democracy, and most importantly from my rather parochial American perspective, a huge threat to ourselves and to our allies.

We have pursued a policy over the last few years of engagement and of bolstering the Lebanese state we had hoped at the expense of Hezbollah, including arms sales topping half a billion dollars. But it is not entirely clear what those arms or that aid have bought. If we had hoped it would buy the disarmament of Hezbollah, we were wrong. If we hoped it would buy independence from Syria or Iran or an end to terrorist training camps—camps whose teachings, by the way, have resulted in the death of American soldiers—we were wrong.

The Obama administration has pursued a determined policy of engagement with Lebanon's overlords in Damascus. Others have said that this is the right policy—thank you, Ryan—affording the United States an opportunity to talk directly to the Syrians about our concerns. I would counter that we have talked to the Syrians repeatedly, through both our Embassy in Damascus and via regular visits from high-level administration officials, and it has not yet paid off. Indeed, Damascus continues to pursue policies that are

anathema to our interests, and some suspect that the Assad regime is even continuing to develop its own nuclear weapons program.

Rumors abound lately that the Obama administration is considering the wisdom of reaching out directly to Hezbollah. I am glad to have heard the administration officials directly contradicting that and contradicting what John Brennan, the White House's top counterterrorism official, suggested was an important way to "build up the more moderate elements" within Hezbollah, after he termed Hezbollah "a very interesting organization." I think those were regrettable statements.

But the fact is that these mixed signals from Washington are dangerous, and we should have little doubt that we are perceived in the region as weak and as confused and as vacillating not just by our friends, but also by our enemies.

The time has come, unfortunately—because I have enormous respect and affection for the people of Lebanon—has come to reassess our relationship with Lebanon and the challenges posed by Hezbollah. I don't believe we will be served by greater rapprochement with Damascus or with their terrorist proxies.

Finally, at a certain moment it is going to be necessary for us to ask whether United States taxpayer dollars going to Lebanon are helping our friends or subsidizing our enemies. If the support to Lebanon's Army is not going to secure Lebanon's borders, and it's not going to rid Lebanon of terrorist groups, one might reasonably ask what it is going for.

That's a question Congress has asked in years past, when Lebanon was a center of kidnapping, hijacking, and murder. And thanks to Hezbollah, it is time for us to ask that again.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Pletka follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DANIELLE PLETKA, VICE PRESIDENT, FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICY STUDIES, THE AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, at the outset, let me say that I spent more than a decade working on the subject of today's hearing as a staff member of this committee; I'm a bit more accustomed to sitting in the chair behind you than the one in front of you. I am grateful for your invitation to testify today—because this feels like a homecoming, and more importantly, because I know from personal experience the important role this committee can play in addressing this vital issue.

Despite a heightened awareness of terrorism and terrorist groups since 9/11, American policy toward Lebanon, Syria, and Hezbollah remains confused—a mass of mixed signals and inconsistent approaches. Despite more than $1.6 billion in economic and military assistance to Lebanon since FY06 (including requests for FY 2011), despite a concerted effort to reach out to the Assad regime in Damascus, and despite a willingness to overlook the increasingly dominant military and political role played by Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Obama administration has little to show for its efforts in the Levant.

In the wake of the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005—a murder in which Hezbollah was reportedly involved—the international community took a relatively hard-line against Syria and its proxies. The resulting end to the Syrian military domination of Lebanon gave many of us hope that Lebanon was at last on track to regain the independence lost in 1976. Certainly, it seemed that Washington, at least, would no longer tolerate the exploitation of the Lebanese people by both Tehran and Damascus.

In the years that followed, there were troublesome developments that should only have fueled our commitment to helping Lebanon protect itself from Syrian and Iranian predations. In 2006, Hezbollah crossed Lebanon's southern border with Israel and kidnapped two Israeli soldiers, sparking a war between Israel and Hezbollah that resulted in substantial loss of life, including among Lebanese civilians. How

was it possible that one armed group could, without consultation or compunction, drag a nominally democratic nation into war?

Worse still, Hezbollah's performance in that conflict revealed that what some in Israel and the United States had dismissed as a ragtag group of terrorists was a sophisticated, well-trained, and very well-armed fighting machine.

The subsequent passage of U.N. Security Council resolution 1701 and its call for "no weapons without the consent of the Government of Lebanon and no authority other than that of the Government of Lebanon" appeared to be another silver lining to the summer war—much as the aftermath of the Hariri murder led to the withdrawal of Syrian troops. But the resolution has been all but ignored in the face of repeated and flagrant violations.

And there were more frightening signs: revelations that Syria was pursuing a nuclear weapons capability; a series of assassinations of anti-Syrian politicians in Lebanon; the collapse of the March 14 movement; Hezbollah's 2008 armed takeover of Beirut, and the subsequent capitulation of March 14 to Hezbollah's demands for a veto over government decisions.

During this political turmoil, Iran and Syria continued to rearm Hezbollah. Transfers, which were slow in the immediate aftermath of the 2006 war, ramped up quickly, and Hezbollah is now significantly better armed than it was in 2006, according to Defense Secretary Robert Gates "Syrian and Iran are providing Hezbollah with rockets and missiles of ever-increasing capability [and] we're at appoint now, where Hezbollah has far more rockets and missiles than most government in the world." Consider the developments reported on AEI's Iran Tracker site from this year alone (citations and sources can be found on the site):

- The Times of London reports that Israeli and American officials believe Syria transferred two Scud missiles into Lebanon, where they are suspected to be in an underground storage facility in the Beqa'a Valley. (Israel reportedly planned to attack one of the Syrian trucks transferring weapons to Hezbollah as it crossed the Lebanese border, but held back on American request. American officials are still hoping that Syria can be convinced to stop supplying Hezbollah with weapons without military intervention. According to the report, satellite imagery shows one of the secret arms facilities in Adra, Syria, where Hezbollah militants have living facilities and trucks to transport the missiles to Lebanon.)
- Hezbollah sources told the Kuwaiti paper Al Rai that the group had the capability to launch 15 tons of explosives at Israel every day in the case of another war between the two sides, going on to claim that Hezbollah possesses a wide range of missiles with a heavy payload, including the 1-ton Zilzal missile and half-ton Fateh 110 and M600 missiles.
- The Israeli Foreign Minister said that the arms seized from a cargo plane in Bangkok in December 2009 were destined for Hezbollah and Hamas. Thai authorities said that the plane, with weapons believed to have originated in North Korea, was carrying 35 tons of weaponry including rockets and RPGs.
- Reports in early May suggest that sometime in the last year, Syria supplied Hezbollah with M600 missile. (The M600 is the Syrian version of the advanced Iranian Fateh-110 missile. The missile's range would allow Hezbollah to hit Tel Aviv from southern Lebanon.)
- In January, a busy month, the Washington Post reported that Hezbollah placed long-range rockets deep into Lebanon and the Beqa'a Valley; Hezbollah terrorists fired an antitank rocket at an IDF bulldozer that was clearing a minefield along the Israeli-Lebanese border, killing a soldier; and the Israeli navy seized an Iranian ship en route to Syria carrying weapons destined for Hezbollah from Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez; the Kuwaiti papers reported a U.S. official saying that Hezbollah operatives trained in Syria on SA2 antiaircraft missile batteries; and finally U.N. peacekeepers uncovered 660 pounds of explosive devices near the border with Israel (this happened in December, but was reported in January).

All these details and more can be found on the Iran Tracker site—www.irantracker.org. But stop for a moment and ponder that fact that this is only news from 2010.

In short, Hezbollah is effectively a state within a state in Lebanon, with an ever growing and ever more sophisticated long range arsenal. It is untrammeled by the Lebanese Government to which it belongs and answerable to no one in that nation, but rather to the dictatorships in Damascus and Tehran. Sadly, hopes that Lebanese leaders answerable to the Lebanese people—and not to foreign powers—would regain control have not been realized. There is no more poignant symbol of that failure than the fact that as Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri was meeting with our own President Obama and his team, Lebanese President Michel Suleiman ap-

peared on Hezbollah's television station, al-Manar, praising Hezbollah and "calling on all Lebanese to embrace and protect [Hezbollah's] arms."

According to the Pentagon, Hezbollah receives up to $200 million in subsidies from Iran each year, in addition to weaponry. Other reports suggest they may receive even more. The group also raises money in the United States, including through criminal activities, and there have been several arrests of Hezbollah fundraisers and supporters in the United States, including one in Ohio last week.

Hezbollah receives training from the elite Quds Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, and in turn provides training to a variety of terrorist groups at its bases in Lebanon. The Pentagon reported in April that "Lebanese Hezbollah has trained Iraqi insurgents in Iraq, Iran, and Lebanon, providing them with the training, tactics, and technology to conduct kidnappings, small unit tactical operations and employ sophisticated improvised explosive devices (IEDs), incorporating lessons learned from operations in southern Lebanon."

In short, Hezbollah is capable of waging war on its own behalf, has a wide network around the world, growing particularly in Latin America, has forged operational alliances with a variety of other terrorist groups, including Sunni groups and affords Iran the opportunity to open a second front in any conflict. And it is able to do all of this behind the facade of "national resistance" in Lebanon, playing the role at once of defender of Lebanese sovereignty, of terrorist training group and of political powerhouse with two seats in the Hariri Cabinet and a veto over national decisionmaking.

What this means for Lebanon is the continued erosion of the state, its subjugation to foreign interests, a loss of independent will and democracy and a potent threat to American allies and American interests. In the years since the Hezbollah-Israel war, the United States has pursued a policy aimed at bolstering the Lebanese state at the expense of Hezbollah. That includes arms sales that top half a billion dollars and substantial aid. It is not entirely clear what either those arms or that aid have bought. If we had hoped it would buy the disarmament of Hezbollah, we were wrong. If we hoped it would buy independence from Syria or Iran or an end to terrorist training camps—camps whose teachings have resulted in the death of American soldiers—we were wrong.

The Obama administration has pursued a determined policy of engagement with Lebanon's overlords in Damascus. Others have said that this is the right policy, affording the United States an opportunity to talk directly to the Syrians about our concerns. I would counter that we have talked to the Syrians repeatedly, through both our Embassy in Damascus and via regular visits from high level administration officials. And that hasn't paid off. Indeed, Damascus continues to pursue policies anathema to our interests, and some suspect the Assad regime is continuing to develop nuclear weapons.

Rumors abound lately that the Obama administration is considering the wisdom of reaching out directly to Hezbollah to establish a dialogue. Recently, John Brennan, the White House's top counterterrorism official, suggested the United States needed to find a way to "build up the more moderate elements" within Hezbollah, which he termed "a very interesting organization."

His statements stand in stark contrast to those of other administration officials, including former DNI Denny Blair, who earlier this year refused to rule out a possible Hezbollah attack on the United States.

These mixed signals from Washington are dangerous, and we should have little doubt that we are perceived in the region as weak—by our friends as well as our enemies.

The time has come to reassess our relationship with Lebanon and the challenge posed by Hezbollah. I do not believe we will be served by greater rapprochement with Damascus or with their terrorist proxies.

Finally, at a certain moment it will be necessary for us to ask whether U.S. taxpayer dollars going to Lebanon are helping our friends, or subsidizing our enemies. If the support to Lebanon's army is not going to secure Lebanon's borders, and it's not going to rid Lebanon of terrorist groups, one might reasonably ask what it is going for. That's a question Congress has asked in years past, when Lebanon was a center of kidnapping, hijacking and murder. Thanks to Hezbollah, it is time to ask again.

Senator CASEY. Thank you very much for your testimony.

Dr. Norton.

STATEMENT OF AUGUSTUS RICHARD NORTON, PROFESSOR OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, BOSTON UNIVERSITY, BOSTON, MA

Dr. NORTON. Thank you very much, Senator Casey, and distinguished members of the committee.

I am going to take your advice to heart to deliver an abbreviated statement, particularly pruning comments that would be redundant of some of the other speakers.

I would like to begin by noting that my first on-the-ground exposure to Lebanon was 30 years ago, when I served for 14 months in southern Lebanon as an unarmed United Nations military observer on secondment from the U.S. Army. Only a bit more than a year before, the shah of Iran had been toppled from power. Hezbollah, the subject of today's hearing, did not exist.

Indeed, the PLO was then the dominant military power from Beirut to the Israeli border, and Israeli-PLO clashes were routine occurrences. This was 1980. Within Lebanon, a civil war had been underway for 5 years, and it would be another decade before the internal conflict came to an end.

As the leader of a small team of well-qualified observers, I enjoyed regular contacts with members of the Lebanese Shia community, including the leaders of a political movement known as Amal that I wrote about in a book in the 1980s. Many of the Lebanese Shia leaders in those early days, while inspired by the recent revolution in Iran, were little interested in importing Iranian models into Lebanon. They yearned for an end to the violence that often took a heavy toll in Shia property and lives.

In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon with grand plans to destroy the PLO and install a friendly Lebanese Government that would become the second Arab State after Egypt to sign a peace treaty with Israel. The Israeli invasion did, in fact, occasion great hope in the country that the civil war would finally be ended, especially since the PLO military apparatus was decimated. The dominant Shia group at the time, Amal, certainly shared the hope that a violent chapter in Lebanon's history was finished.

In Washington, you will recall the Reagan administration seized upon the Israeli invasion as a strategic opportunity and, along with European allies, launched the multinational force to help stabilize security in and around Beirut. Meantime, while Israel incrementally retrenched its forces, it established an occupation zone in southern Lebanon, the Shia heartland. That zone was not surrendered until the year 2000.

Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon for roughly two decades would contribute to the radicalization of the Shia and undermine more moderate voices and, therefore, was counterproductive.

With Iranian tutelage, a cadre of Lebanese Shias rejected Amal's relatively conciliatory stance vis-a-vis Israel and sought to reproduce Iran's revolutionary model in Lebanon. By the mid-1980s, they would coalesce into Hezbollah. A number of them participated in the hallmark acts of violence and terrorism that we are all familiar with from the horrendous 1980s.

Mr. Chairman, I begin with these recollections because I believe they are relevant to understanding the topic at hand, namely, the

strength of Hezbollah in 2010 and its ability to sustain impressive popular support in Lebanon.

How did a relatively small group of revolution-oriented conspirators become arguably the most powerful and popular organization in Lebanon? I offer five key explanations, in addition, obviously, to significant Iranian subsidy and support.

No. 1, the resistance to Israeli occupation. While Hezbollah was not the only group challenging Israel's presence, it was by far the most successful and earned great credit for that.

Two, institution-building. Recent decades have witnessed a proliferation of social, cultural, and economic organizations serving the Shia community. Hezbollah's are among the most efficiently run and most admired. Lebanese opponents to Hezbollah have acknowledged that it is really the only fully institutionalized political party in Lebanon.

Third, the worldview that it offers. Hezbollah promotes an ideology that stresses the importance of resistance, not just to foreign occupiers—and of course, it emphasizes Israel and the United States in particular in that context—but resistance to injustice, corruption, and poverty. And that worldview has gained a significant footing in the Lebanese Shia community, which comprises roughly one-third of the total population of Lebanon.

Fourth, piety. Hezbollah advocates an expansive view of piety that stresses commitment, engagement, community participation, and individual responsibility. While this conception of piety is hardly unique to Hezbollah, or to Shia Islam for that matter, it is an important element in the organization's message to its followers.

Fifth, pragmatism. At key junctures in its history, Hezbollah has changed course, notably in 1992 when it put aside its condemnation of Lebanese politics as "corrupt to the core" in order to participate in elections and in the political process.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, when Israel unilaterally withdrew from its self-declared "security zone" in May 2000, it did so noting that this was a unilateral decision on the part of Israel. It was not being done under pressure. Nonetheless, Hezbollah was widely credited and celebrated in Lebanon for playing the leading role in forcing Israel to exit.

The fact is that Hezbollah did prove a very potent foe to the Israeli Army in Lebanon and to its allies. It is widely believed in Lebanon that Israel would still be occupying a large chunk of the country were it not for the antioccupation resistance.

Hezbollah's main rival, Amal—which it has fought at various times over the course of the last decades—continues to enjoy support in segments of the Shia community, Amal has lost many of its supporters to Hezbollah. Much of the growing Shia middle class—and there is a significant middle class that has emerged over the last three or four decades—most of the growing middle class in particular grew disappointed with Amal's inefficiency, its corruption, and its inability to be other than a large patronage network, which is not to say that they have necessarily joined Hezbollah, but they tend to support it.

When I revisit many of villages and towns in the Bekaa Valley in south Lebanon that I first encountered decades ago, today I see

impressive evidence of flourishing economies—new homes, good cars, competent public services, and a variety of institutions that did not exist before, such as modern clinics and decent schools. Many of these communities benefit from wealth earned in Africa, where Lebanese Shias play active roles as traders and entrepreneurs.

In addition, a variety of religious foundations linked to revered Shia clerics—Ayatollah Ali Sistani in Najaf, Iraq, for example; Lebanon's own Ayatollah Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah—offer a range of services as well. In other words, Hezbollah is not the only player in the provision of services. There are many others that provide services. But Hezbollah services are important and are a partial explanation for the level of support it enjoys. But the fact is that there are other threads of support.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, when Israel did withdraw in 2000, with Syrian support and encouragement, Hezbollah insisted on keeping its arms. So long as Israel remained in Lebanon, Damascus could claim that the key to a secure northern border for Israel was in a peace agreement with Syria. The Israeli exit undermined Syria's leverage.

Hezbollah argued that the Israeli withdrawal was incomplete since Israel continued to occupy a segment of Lebanese territory in the Golan Heights. More important, the group argued that unless Israel was deterred from returning to Lebanon, it would exploit Lebanon's weakness. This is not an argument that persuaded all Lebanese or all Shias, for that matter. But it did persuade many.

As the afterglow of the celebrations ebbed, Hezbollah's rationale for keeping its weapons was increasingly challenged in Lebanon, particularly after the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri in February 2005 and the exit of Syrian forces a few months hence.

So prior to the 2006 war, there were many, many voices being raised: "Why do they still have these weapons"? And in fact those voices are still being raised today. However, and I will close on this point, the effect of the 2006 war was to, in effect, validate the narrative of Hezbollah for the Shia community. In other words, the need for a deterrent vis-a-vis Israel.

I have sat in Lebanese villages in south Lebanon and listened to informal debates, and these are places I have been going for many years. People are very comfortable with me listening to what they are saying and so on. And I have heard people debate precisely this question about defense and deterrence.

And what they frequently say, apropos of Ambassador Crocker's comment, is that they love the Lebanese Army. It is a national institution. They revere it, but it is too weak. And given their history of conflict, given the invasions and the incursions and the punitive raids that they have experienced, particularly in southern Lebanon, there is a very strong argument in their minds for Hezbollah's role as a deterrent force.

Unless Hezbollah can be defeated completely, which is to say in military parlance defeated in detail, it is very likely that a new war, which many Lebanese expect to happen, that a new war will further validate Hezbollah's model of deterrence. Which is to say that, in my view, it is not likely that another war, if it comes, is going to result in the elimination of Hezbollah.

To the contrary, in many ways, it will strengthen its argument and its base of support precisely because defeating an enemy like Hezbollah cannot be done by dropping bombs. It cannot be done by indirect fire, but it requires face-to-face, eyeball-to-eyeball combat. And in that context, the Israeli army gives up many, many of its advantages.

So I think we are really in a kind of conundrum. This is an organization that raises significant challenges for the United States, for the security of Israel. Yet it is very firmly entrenched in a segment of Lebanese society which is not insignificant, and given its role in providing what it deems a deterrent force for Lebanon, its role is likely to continue to be validated over the course of time, particularly if there is more conflict.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Norton follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AUGUSTUS RICHARD NORTON, PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND ANTHROPOLOGY, BOSTON UNIVERSITY, AND VISITING PROFESSOR IN THE POLITICS OF THE MIDDLE EAST, OXFORD UNIVERSITY

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today about Hezbollah, a group that has become a powerful player in Lebanese politics, a formidable militia force capable of posing a serious challenge to Israel's vaunted military, and a group that is both a beneficiary of Iranian largesse and an accomplice to Iran's ambition for regional hegemony in the Middle East.

My first on-the-ground exposure to Lebanon was 30 years ago when I served for 14 months in southern Lebanon as an unarmed United Nations military observer (on secondment from the U.S. Army). Only a bit more than year before, the Shah of Iran had been toppled from power. Hezbollah, the subject of today's hearing, did not exist. Indeed, the PLO was then the dominant military power from Beirut to the Israeli border, and Israeli-PLO clashes were routine occurrences. This was 1980. Within Lebanon a civil war had been underway for 5 years, and it would be another decade before the internal conflict came to an end. As the leader of a small team of well-qualified observers, I enjoyed regular contacts with members of the Lebanese Shi'i Muslim community, including the leaders of a political movement known as Amal.

The Shi'i Muslims are the largest single community in Lebanon, probably accounting for a third or more of the total population, and they primarily live in and around Beirut, in the Bekaa Valley and in South Lebanon. Historically, this is an underprivileged community. I recall vividly the dreadful conditions that defined many Shi'i villages, legacies of decades of neglect by the central government exacerbated by the ravages of recent fighting.

Many of the Lebanese Shi'i leaders in those early days, while inspired by the revolution in Iran, were little interested in importing Iranian models into Lebanon. They yearned for an end to the violence that often took a heavy toll in Shi'i lives and property. In 1982, Israel invaded with grand plans to destroy the PLO and install a friendly Lebanese Government that would become the second Arab State to sign a peace treaty with Israel. The Israeli invasion occasioned great hope in Lebanon that the civil war would be finally be ended, especially since the PLO military apparatus was decimated. The dominant Shi'i group at the time, Amal, certainly shared the hope that a violent chapter in Lebanon's history was finished.

In Washington, the Reagan administration seized upon the Israeli invasion as a strategic opportunity, and along with European allies launched the Multinational Force to help stabilize security in an around Beirut. Meantime, while Israel incrementally retrenched its forces, it established an occupation zone in southern Lebanon, the Shi'i heartland. That zone was not surrendered until 2000. Israel's occupation would contribute to the radicalization of the Shi'a and undermine more moderate voices, and was therefore counterproductive.

An even more horrific chapter was, in fact, only beginning in Lebanon. Iran and Syria were important characters in that chapter, and those that followed. When recalling the horrendous decade of the 1980s in Lebanon, images of the ruins of the U.S. Embassy, the decimation of the Marine barracks and its hundreds of sleeping

occupants, and the cruel captivity suffered by scores innocent hostages, some held for many years, leap to mind.

With Iranian tutelage, a cadre of Lebanese Shi'is rejected Amal's relatively conciliatory stance and sought to reproduce Iran's revolutionary model in Lebanon. By the mid-1980s, they would coalesce into Hezbollah. A number of them participated in the hallmarks acts of violence and terrorism referred to above.

In 1982, Syria permitted Iran to establish a foothold in Lebanon for a contingent of Revolutionary Guards. It should be noted, however, that Syria for many years was deeply suspicious of Hezbollah and there were several serious clashes between the Syrian army and Hezbollah militants. In fact, Syria lent much support to Amal, for which Hezbollah was the main rival. Particularly while President Hafez al-Asad was alive (died: 2000), Syria often assiduously balanced the political gains of Hezbollah and Amal.

Mr. Chairman, I begin with these recollections because I believe they are relevant to understanding the topic at hand, namely the strength of Hezbollah in 2010, and its ability to sustain impressive popular support in Lebanon.

How did a relatively small group of revolution-oriented conspirators become arguably the most powerful and popular organization in Lebanon? I offer five key explanations:

- Resistance to Israeli occupation: While Hezbollah was by no means the only group challenging Israel's presence; it was by far the most successful.
- Institution-building: Recent decades have witnessed a proliferation of social, cultural, and economic organizations serving the Shi'i community, Hezbollah's are among the most efficiently run and most admired. Lebanese opponents to Hezbollah have acknowledged that it is really the only fully institutionalized political party in the country.
- Worldview: Hezbollah promotes an ideology that stresses the importance of resistance, not just to foreign occupiers—and to Israel and the United States in particular—but resistance to injustice, corruption, and poverty.
- Piety: Hezbollah advocates an expansive view of piety that stresses commitment, engagement, community participation and individual responsibility. While this conception of piety is hardly unique to Hezbollah or to Shi'i Islam for that matter, it is an important element in the organization's message to its followers.
- Pragmatism: At key junctures in its history, Hezbollah has changed course, notably in 1992 when it put aside its condemnation of Lebanese politics as "corrupt to the core" in order to participate in elections and in the political process.

When Israel unilaterally withdrew from its self-declared "Security Zone" (which accounted for roughly 10 percent of Lebanon's territory), in May 2000, Hezbollah was widely credited and celebrated in Lebanon for playing the leading role in forcing Israel to exit. Israel denies that it withdrew under pressure. The fact is that Hezbollah proved an increasingly potent foe. It is widely believed in Lebanon that Israel would still be occupying a large chunk of the country were it not for the antioccupation resistance.

While Hezbollah's main rival, Amal, continues to enjoy support in segments of the Shi'i community, it has lost many of its supporters to Hezbollah. Much of the growing Shi'i middle class, in particular, grew disappointed with Amal's inefficiency, corruption, and its inability to be other than a large patronage network, which is not to say that they have necessarily joined Hezbollah.

When I revisit many of villages and towns in South Lebanon that I first encountered decades ago, I see impressive evidence of a flourishing economy: new homes, good cars, competent public services, and a variety of institutions that did not exist before, such as modern clinics and decent schools. Many of these communities benefit from wealth earned in Africa, where Lebanese Shi'is play active roles as traders and entrepreneurs. In addition, a variety of religious foundations linked to revered Shi'i clerics, such as Ayatollah Ali Sistani, based in Najaf, Iraq, and Lebanon's own Ayatollah Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, offer a range of services. Support for Hezbollah is by no means universal, but it is widespread in these towns and villages. Yet, we should remember that loyalties and affiliations run in many different directions.

Whether they live in the Bekaa valley, the South or in al-dahiya the bustling, predominantly Shi'i suburbs of Beirut, families are typically linked to relatives in the other regions by marriage, nativity, or economics. The migration from the Bekaa and the South to al-dahiya is a relatively recent phenomenon, in that the surge from the countryside to the city began in the middle of the 20th century. So, not only is Lebanon a small country to begin with, but people living in the various regions typically have extensive networks of ties to the other regions. This is one reason

why violence in one area quickly elicits a reaction in other settings. It is also why the Israeli occupation inspired so much resistance.

With Syrian support and encouragement, Hezbollah insisted on keeping its arms despite Israel's exit in 2000. So long as Israel remained in Lebanon, Damascus could argue that the key to a secure northern border for Israel was in a peace agreement with Syria. The Israeli exit undermined Syria's leverage. Hezbollah argued that the Israeli withdrawal was incomplete since Israel continued to occupy a segment of Lebanese territory in the Golan Heights. More important, the group argued that unless Israel was deterred from returning to Lebanon, it would exploit Lebanon's weakness. This is not an argument that persuaded all Lebanese, or all Shi'is for that matter.

As the afterglow of the celebrations ebbed, Hezbollah's rationale for keeping its weapons was increasingly challenged, particularly after the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in February 2005, and the exit of Syrian forces a few months hence.

It bears emphasizing that the Israel-Lebanon border area was quiet from 2000 to 2006 by historical standards. In 1999, the last full year of Israeli occupation, there were over 1,500 military operations in southern Lebanon, according to the Israeli researcher Daniel Sobelman. In contrast, for the next 6 years, there were only a few dozen in total. Israeli military casualties averaged one-to-two soldiers annually, and there were only two civilian deaths attributable to Israeli or Hezbollahi fire. Notwithstanding commentary to the contrary, rockets were not routinely flying across the border into Israel.

This period of relative quiet ended in July 2006, when Hezbollah captured two Israeli soldiers in a raid across the border into Israel. They had been trying to do so for months, in order to use the captives as bargaining chips to gain the release of Lebanese prisoners held by Israel, including one Lebanese convicted for his role in a deadly 1979 terrorist attack in northern Israel. As the Hezbollah leader Hasan Nasrallah later acknowledged, he and his cohort failed to anticipate the fierce Israeli response that would follow. The result was a destructive war that lasted 33 days.

Israeli generals overestimated the effectiveness of air strikes, and expected a relatively short campaign with the goal of crippling Hezbollah. Hezbollah proved a far more tenacious adversary than Israel anticipated. The war ended up displacing half a million Israelis and close to a million Lebanese. In addition to painful military losses on each side, 43 Israeli and more than 1,000 Lebanese civilians were killed. The material damage in Lebanon was severe, and included 78 destroyed or badly damaged bridges, as well as 15,000 homes badly damaged or destroyed.

Across the Arab world the war elicited widespread support for Hezbollah, although that support has since faded. More to the point of this hearing, the war prompted two opposing results in Lebanon: For some Lebanese Christians (who account for no more than one-third of the total population), and particularly for non-Shi'i Muslims, especially the Sunnis, Hezbollah's role in starting the war evinced animosity and anger, and underlined the need to disarm it and check its power. Local Sunni-Shi'i tensions erupted in several deadly clashes, but thankfully cooler heads prevailed, including within Hezbollah.

These concerns intensified in May 2008, when Hezbollah and its allies took up arms against fellow Lebanese to thwart a government decision that would shut down its private fiber-optic communications network.

The Lebanese victims of the 2006 war were overwhelmingly Shi'i Muslims, just as the areas targeted were predominantly Shi'i areas. The Beirut suburbs, Hezbollah's epicenter, were continually bombed and the line between civilian and military targets blurred quickly. At one point the Israeli Chief of Staff was quoted as directing that for every Hezbollah rocket striking Haifa, a 1-story building in al-dahiya would be destroyed. The result was that most Shi'a viewed the war as one conceived to target their community. This validated the Hezbollah resistance narrative, and the argument that unless Israel was deterred, it would invade Lebanon at will.

I have sat in on informal debates about Hezbollah security role in Lebanese Shi'i villages. These were not academic debates, the real life concerns. The Lebanese Army is widely revered in Lebanon, probably because it is one of the few truly national institutions. Even so, the Army is not viewed as a credible force that is capable to defend Lebanon against Israel. Therefore, deferring to Hezbollah is seen as a necessary and realistic option, even by Shi'is who are ideologically distant from Hezbollah.

Meanwhile Sunni-Shi'i tensions linger. These tensions were manifest in last June's elections when Sunni voters were mobilized en masse to support the Future Movement and vote against slates connected with Hezbollah. I saw this myself when

I observed the 2009 elections in the Bekaa valley city of Zahle, and in some of the predominantly Sunni villages in the surrounding areas. Participation rates were very high, and the candidates sympathetic with Hezbollah received only 10 or 15 percent of the total votes.

However, Lebanese politics are by definition consensus politics. The idea that one sect or party can control or dominate the political system is far from the mark. Thus, when a new government was finally formed in Beirut, last fall, Hezbollah and its allies ended up with one-third of the ministerial posts and with the ability to block any decision that threatened to undermine the group's military power. The ministerial statement that announced the new government explicitly acknowledged Hezbollah's role in defending Lebanon. The declaration referred to "the right of Lebanon through its people, Army and the Resistance to liberate the Shebaa Farms, the Kfar Shuba Hills and the northern part of the village of Ghajar as well as to defend Lebanon and its territorial waters in the face of any enemy by all available and legal means."

Since 2006, there has been an uncommon solidarity within the Shi'i community and Hezbollah has been the beneficiary. I argue that the solidarity of the Shi'i community is an aberration, it is an artifact of the recent war, as well as the fear that another war looms. This is a war that Hezbollah claims it does not seek, but that Israel is expected to launch. Preparations for that war are underway on both sides.

During the late 1990s, while the Israeli occupation continued, Hezbollah's full-time military cadre numbered about 500 and was supplemented through a reserve system (in some ways similar to Israel's). By 2006, that number had doubled. Today, the standing military force is measured in the thousands. There is no way for a civilian researcher to reliably estimate the size of Hezbollah's arsenal, but by the group's own estimates its store of arms is far more robust and more sophisticated than it was in 2006.

Despite the fears of war, the Israeli-Lebanese border has been very quiet since the 2006 war. UNIFIL, bolstered under Security Council Resolution 1701, has provided an effective buffer. While it has stopped Hezbollah from publically displaying weapons in the border region, it has not, however, impeded Hezbollah's ability to rearm.

Unless Hezbollah can be decisively defeated by Israel—defeated in detail, in military parlance—the effect of another war would be to bolster Hezbollah, and to once again validate its narrative. For a variety of reasons, I believe that it is unlikely that Israel is capable of decisively defeating Hezbollah's hardened forces. The level of civilian casualties, probably on both sides, would be dreadful, and would prompt a fierce backlash in the Muslim world. Equally important, Israeli soldiers would have to go toe to toe with Hezbollah fighters who know the difficult terrain of Lebanon intimately and have a strong incentive to protect the homefront. The Israeli Army's comparative advantages, especially technical sophistication, largely disappear in close combat.

Mr. Chairman, I have tried to explain the solidarity that currently exists within the Lebanese Shi'i community to the benefit of Hezbollah. Yet, there are a variety of divisions with the community as well. These include secular and clerical opponents of Hezbollah, and, of course, the longstanding rivalry with Amal. In addition, there are strong feelings in some quarters that Hezbollah is too closely aligned with Iran, and that the community's interests are better served through Arab as opposed to Persian ties. We see variants of these views in Iraq. These latent divisions will remain submerged as long as so many Shi'a feel that their community faces an existential threat. One key to reducing Hezbollah's mass appeal may be to reduce the threat of war, rather than heighten it. So long as the threat prevails, Hezbollah will be a prime beneficiary.

Senator CASEY. Doctor, thank you very much.

We will go to our questions now. And I do want to note for the record, Ms. Pletka, you had mentioned in your statement. I am glad you made reference to this recent news. I guess it was—I can never tell where the dates are on some of these things. But recently, the news—this is a CNN report—an Ohio couple was arrested in Toledo for allegedly plotting to send money to the terrorist organization Hezbollah in Lebanon. Federal authorities said there was a Federal complaint filed, and it goes on from there. I won't read the story for the record, but it is a timely reminder of the reach of Hezbollah.

I guess one of the questions I wanted to ask, and in hearings like this, we don't mind a little intrapanel debate. I know that Ambassador Crocker and Ms. Pletka were seemingly having the beginnings of a debate. We will save some time for that.

But one of the questions hanging over this discussion, obviously, is something that each of you, in one way or another, referred to, and we all did in some way, some more pointedly than others, not the only question obviously, but one of the central questions is no matter what our Government does, no matter what our policy is, no matter how much money we spend, no matter how determined we are as it relates to the challenge posed by Hezbollah, if we don't have a partner, we don't have a willing partner in the Lebanese Government to not only have the right policy to deal with this challenge, but also to build up their own government, their own society, their own internal and army security forces, we are not going to be very successful.

And I guess the question I have is that it seems that no matter what leader you point to, and I know Prime Minister Hariri is trying very hard. He is at the beginning of a—somewhat at the beginning of a new administration, had a recent visit to Syria that got a lot of attention and we hope will bear fruit.

But in some way or another, there is a sense that each leader in Lebanon has been co-opted to a certain extent, at least that is part of the perception. And given that fact, or at least that assertion, and given the political roots, I am using my own formulation, political roots that Hezbollah has implanted in the society, how can we play—or what is the best way for us to play a constructive role here? Instead of, I mean, obviously, we are going to be continuing to send aid, and we should. And we should track the dollars, make sure it is spent the right way and do all of the due diligence required.

But is there something missing in our policy because of the reality that we see in Lebanon itself? Ambassador Crocker, do you want to take a shot at that?

Ambassador CROCKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think what we require most in Lebanon is consistency. Simply to take the decision that our best option in Lebanon, and I certainly don't see a better one, is sustained support for the Lebanese Government generally and the Lebanese Armed Forces in particular and to stick with it, making it clear to the Lebanese, the government, the military, and the population that we are a long-term partner. To make it clear in Syria and in Iran that we are not going to cede this field to them.

I would make the same recommendation, incidentally, with respect to Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. One of our greatest challenges is overcoming our own strategic impatience and deciding this isn't working so let us try something else. That is what our allies have come to fear and our adversaries have come to count on in a variety of theaters, but we are talking today about Lebanon.

So it is that consistency, a sustained message that we are there to support Lebanon. While it is true that some Lebanese have been co-opted, it is also true that probably more have been threatened and, indeed, assassinated. There is a lot of courage on the part of

the Lebanese who are on a very difficult track and a very difficult position, and I think our understanding there is also important.

So that would be my primary recommendation. Again, if there are magic bullets, I can't think of them. I think it is sustained engagement.

And in the interest of doing my best to liven up this panel, I would note that Ms. Pletka and I had a discussion almost 20 years ago when I was the Ambassador to Lebanon and she was a member of the committee staff at age of 13 in which I lobbied with a singular lack of success for the committee's support in rebuilding a training and supply relationship with the Lebanese Armed Forces.

Senator CASEY. Was this debate on the record? [Laughter.]

Ambassador CROCKER. No, it wasn't. That was back when she had the luxury of being a staffer and could have these closed room sessions.

Senator CASEY. This is news, though. You just made some news here.

Ms. PLETKA. No, we didn't.

Senator CASEY. I wanted to just follow up on that. I want to have each of our witnesses address this question. But just on the question of having a more sustained engagement and some manifestation or demonstration of that.

We recently had an interesting debate the last couple of years, which resulted in a new initiative for the Government of Pakistan. And of course, despite all of the hard work that went into that in the House and Senate and we were sending a message that we wanted to help on things other than military, when the news kind of landed in South Asia, there was some opposition in the Pakistani society. And some of that was political. We can discount some of it because people are playing domestic politics there.

But it was a positive signal, I thought, to send that we were serious about the relationship. We wanted to help on things that weren't just military, wasn't just going to be a short-term relationship. It wasn't going to be just transactional or ad hoc or however you would describe it.

Do you think in this instance there is a need for something if not a replica of that, but something other than this effort that we have highlighted, whether it was $139 million this year or hundreds of millions over the last couple of years? Do you think something that demonstrative or that significant is required, or do you think there are other ways to effectuate that, that relationship or that sustained engagement?

Ambassador CROCKER. Mr. Chairman, that is a great point. Again, I commend this committee for the legislation it did pass with respect to Pakistan. I think that was a very positive signal, particularly given the backdrop of our uneven relationship with Pakistan.

And I, for one, would favor a similar approach to Lebanon that says we are in this for the long haul. If we were to take that approach, I would hope that we would not overly condition it because, again, it can actually have a negative rather than a positive effect. I think it is recognizing the region for what it is, Lebanon for what it is—a weak state with much stronger neighbors—and accept that

this will take a long time, but commit to being in it for the long haul. I think it is a great idea.

Senator CASEY. Ms. Pletka? On the same broader question.

Ms. PLETKA. What Ryan didn't admit is that—and I was only 12 then, by the way, not 13—he didn't admit that I was bludgeoned ultimately and my boss then was bludgeoned into supporting IMET, military education and training, for the Lebanese Armed Forces a mere year later, and great results there.

I think that your question is an important one, but if I could just step back a second and ask an important question back at the committee and at those who support Lebanon and the relationship. What do we seek? What are we looking for out of this?

We have a tendency, and I think all of us have a tendency because of our great affection and respect for the people of Lebanon and for our love of that country and our desire to see it independent, we have a tendency to talk about Lebanon in a sentimental fashion without talking about some of the hard-nosed ambitions that we would normally have associated with our assistance programs. We are not giving $1.6 billion in assistance to a country because we really love them and they are pretty great.

We are giving that assistance because we seek to build a relationship which serves our interests, and our interests are served by seeing Lebanon independent. Ryan is exactly right that we have an inconsistency of messages that we send, and I would suggest that we have once again reversed and decided to, in the vernacular, throw Lebanon under the bus in pursuit of a better relationship with Syria, thinking that that will serve our larger ambitions.

But if we are seeking from Lebanon to see some curtailment of the threat that Hezbollah poses, the most potent terrorist organization next to al-Qaeda and perhaps better organized and better armed than al-Qaeda, if we are seeking to see them reined in, if we are seeking to see them not pose a threat, not pose the possibility of a conflict yet again this summer, which could embroil the entire region, then I don't think we are being very satisfied, OK?

That is a tough question, and I think it deserves a tough answer. And the truth is that we haven't given one today. Yes, it is hard for Prime Minister Hariri. Yes, President Suleiman is in a rough position. Yes, Hezbollah has support.

But if Hezbollah is a terrorist organization on the American list for an enormously long time, responsible for the death of American citizens, started a war 4 years ago, and could well start one again, then perhaps we need to say a little bit more than, isn't it kind of tough and really hard for the Lebanese Armed Forces to do what is necessary. They haven't done it, not after 16, 17 years of IMET and more than $1.6 billion. So that is my broader perspective on this question.

Senator CASEY. So you would argue they have been too accommodating in a sense?

Ms. PLETKA. I think that the Lebanese Government has been—I think that in a perfect world they would not want to do this. I don't think that anybody likes going and bowing at the feet of Bashar al-Assad. I don't think they like it. I don't think they want to.

Senator CASEY. Let me ask you just a real practical kind of this year budget question. What do we do? Do you not send $139 million? Do you condition it? Do you change the focus of it? What would you—I mean, if you were able to write the script, what would you do?

Ms. PLETKA. If I were able to write the script, I would absolutely condition it. I think this is not just a question, though, of writing things down in legislation, although that is the sine qua non of progress. People from the State Department always hate conditional legislation. I know that, but I would absolutely condition it.

But I also think that aggressive oversight is enormously important. What we need to see is actually what is happening on the ground. We are not building up the Lebanese Armed Forces for the eventual possibility that maybe one day they could serve as an alternative to Hezbollah. The members of this committee were talking about a war this summer, right? That is not an eventual "could, would" scenario.

So I think that that is enormously important, and I would absolutely condition it. But I would backstop it with very strong support for the Lebanese Government in standing up to Syria and to Iran and, when necessary, to terrorism within from Hezbollah.

Senator CASEY. Dr. Norton, the same question?

Dr. NORTON. Yes, I would like to come at it a little bit differently, Senator Casey. First of all, I want to begin by saying that Lebanese politics is an extremely messy process. I mean, this is a country which puts the "C" in consensus. You cannot imagine a government in the real world of Lebanon in which you have the domination of a single party or even a small group of parties.

It is a messy, consensual process. And to expect in that context for the government to take a clear, unmitigated stance is, frankly, unrealistic.

Here is the point that needs to be made: The current solidarity of the Shia community in Lebanon is an aberration. It is an aberration. It is a function of recent history. It is a function of a war and conflict and suffering.

When you look at that Shia community, you see all kinds of different tendencies. You see different loyalties to different religious authorities—Sistani, Fadlallah, Shirazi, and so on. You see lots of different religious orientations. You see the old Amal-Hezbollah tensions. You see various secular forces in the Shia community.

If you want to undermine the base of Hezbollah, which is really the thrust of today's hearing, it seems to me, then what you need to do is create conditions in Lebanon in which people feel more secure, and in that context, building up the army I think is a good thing. Building up the Internal Security Force—ISF—is a good thing.

And as a government, it seems to me, the United States should be working very hard to make sure that we do not have another replay of a summer war that leaves a very unsatisfying result and perhaps even strengthens Hezbollah as an outcome. So it seems to me those two things are very, very important. Strengthening the internal infrastructure, yes, and also tamping down the possibility of war.

And I should say that when you look back at the history, for example, 2000 to 2006, notwithstanding one of the comments of one of your colleagues, that was a very quiet period of time. There was one Israeli civilian killed. There was one Lebanese civilian killed. There were a total of nine Israeli soldiers killed, far less than the preceding period of 20 years.

And in fact, the year before the Israelis withdrew in 2000, there were 1,560 military operations in south Lebanon. So the point is that there is a possibility of "rules of the game" being observed and the border region continuing to be quiet, and it has been quiet, of course, since the 2006 war.

There needs to be a real focus to make sure that we don't have a replay of the summer war. That would be a disaster not just on the human level, but for U.S. foreign policy interests, in my view.

Senator CASEY. I wanted to—I do think, though, when we think of what transpired in 2006, some 4,000 rockets into Israel is a disturbing indication of what was taking place there. And Ms. Pletka, you mentioned—I am trying to recall the source—in your testimony that I guess it was a Hezbollah source telling a journalist about the potential daily fire power? What was that number?

Ms. PLETKA. That was—it was Hezbollah sources in an interview with a Kuwaiti paper, Al Rai, which frequently reports on this, saying that the group had the capability to launch 15 tons of explosives at Israel every day in the case of another war.

By the way, Senator, I would only correct there was a soldier killed on the border, an Israeli soldier killed by a Hezbollah antitank rocket earlier this year. So the border hasn't been quiet, and I don't think that those 600 tons of buried weaponry that UNIFIL found was intention of any further quietude on the part of Hezbollah either.

Senator CASEY. And let me go back to a point that each of you have made in one way or the other, or at least referred to it, and it is an important area of review. And that is apart from the obvious and I think a compelling threat that Hezbollah poses militarily and apart from the building up of the security forces, this whole other set of questions that are nonmilitary in nature, which is what is happening on the ground in an economic or societal sense with the Lebanese people?

I mean, I asked in the session we had with Prime Minister Hariri. I had come into the meeting late, and they had covered a lot of the other questions. But one thing I asked him was about his own economy. He kind of walked through the state of play there.

But I guess I would ask you what can you tell us about—because I am trying to remember who now referred earlier to the growth rate, and there are some good indicators there. But what do you think has to happen to give people a better sense of economic security that obviously plays a role in whether someone can be radicalized or not or can be susceptible to any kind of approach that Hezbollah would make to citizens? Is there an economic need there, or is there a hole in the economy, or is there a job or growth challenge that we haven't really talked about yet?

Anyone who wants to start.

Ms. PLETKA. I would love to start. I think that as Professor Norton said rightly and as Ambassador Crocker said, Hezbollah has

successfully exploited a hole in Lebanon. The Shia have been a traditionally underprivileged, maltreated, and ignored group, largely concentrated in southern Lebanon. The group that previously was their political representative, Amal, is enormously corrupt, and didn't do anything for them. The Council of the South, which is meant to provide money to them, very rarely did anything effective.

But here is the problem: We provide aid, and we actually focus some of our aid on the south. But Hezbollah is able to step in with money that they receive from Iran and elsewhere, and they are able to buy loyalty. They are able to buy projects. In the wake of the 2006 war, they committed to rebuild houses almost immediately. Governments don't—normal governments like ours don't work quite that efficiently.

One of the things that would be really nice to see is an end to Iranian money sloshing around inside Lebanon. If the Republican Party—let us just pick a party, since there are no Republicans here—was receiving tens of millions of dollars in support from a foreign country, which it was then taking to use, to pass around for walking around money, it would be a giant scandal. And yet this money is sloshing around inside Lebanon to benefit one particular party, which they spread around to buy loyalty.

If that changed inside Lebanon, I think a lot of the dynamics would change, too. And we need to also press the government—the legitimate government—to actually take care of their population in need.

Senator CASEY. The best estimate now, a couple hundred million from Iran every year? Is that the——

Ms. PLETKA. It is probably more than that. I don't think anybody knows directly because some of it comes via banks and some of it comes via suitcases. But it is at least $200 million just in cash. That doesn't count the value of the weaponry.

Senator CASEY. Ambassador Crocker.

Ambassador CROCKER. I would absolutely endorse Ms. Pletka's last point. Lebanon is something of a democracy. Constituent views count. And right now, unfortunately, the substantial majority of Shia support Hezbollah, both as a source of Arab pride, standing up to America and Israel, but also because they provide the benefits, thanks to Iranian largesse.

The Lebanese Government could do more, and I think we should press it to do more to overcome some of these inequities. Ambassador Feltman spoke of something like 8 percent annual GDP growth. Well, that is not happening in places like Bourj el-Barajneh in the southern suburbs, and the contrasts are absolutely striking to go from the rebuilt commercial center of Beirut or the Maronite neighborhoods of Ashrafia a few short miles into the southern suburbs, and you have gone half the world away.

And it feeds this narrative of the Shia as the deprived and the dispossessed, and that is a narrative that is generations old, as I noted in my statement. You have got to change that narrative, I think, before you can, over the long term, change the dynamic that supports Hezbollah within Lebanon.

And if there is a way to get after the money, as Dani suggests, or if there are more ways to think creatively about getting after the money, that would definitely be worth pursuing.

Senator CASEY. Do you think that has been—that problem has been exacerbated substantially since you were serving there? Or is there any way to compare the two time periods?

Ambassador CROCKER. And I don't—I haven't been in Lebanon for some years now, but my sense is that the differences have been exacerbated, that the extraordinary growth in the non-Shia parts of Lebanon, in Beirut itself and to the north, since the early 1990s has, once again, made Beirut look like the Geneva of the Middle East.

The development of the southern suburbs and the south, while there has been some, has been far, far less. So I think the disparities now loom even larger than they did back in the days of the civil war itself.

Senator CASEY. Dr. Norton, you had something?

Dr. NORTON. Well, first of all, I would emphasize the fact that Lebanon is a wonderful country, great place to visit. As I frequently tell my students, it is not, however, someplace where you want to be poor. There is no safety net.

And the government has never been particularly conscientious about providing a safety net. And if you are in need, then you have to depend on family or institutions or religious groups or whoever else is willing to help you. And that has not changed, and in my opinion, it may not change.

And I must also underline, I know we are talking largely about the Shia community. But, Senator Casey, I would also invite you, if you visit Lebanon, to visit north Lebanon, which is largely a Sunni area, north of Tripoli. If you want to see utter poverty and literally hundreds, thousands of young, sullen men sitting around because they don't have work, available to be mobilized by this or that group. You have got a real problem on your hands. So it is not just the Shia community.

And I would say, and I tried to hint at this in my statement, that in many ways, the Shia community has done pretty well over the last decades. There has been an awful lot of money coming in from Africa, private money. There is a developing and growing middle class. It doesn't look like downtown Beirut, but it is coming.

And some of these villages that I knew three decades ago that didn't have water or electricity and so on, you go to them now, you find banks, and you find functioning services and even municipal swimming pools and so on. So things are coming along, but there certainly are great pockets of poverty.

But it is a formidable challenge to get the Lebanese Government engaged on dealing with those segments of the population—Christian, Muslim, whatever they may be—that are really in need. That really hasn't been a strong suit of any Lebanese Government in my recollection.

Senator CASEY. Well, thank you very much.

I know we have to conclude. I wanted to keep within our 1-hour promise and especially for those who are traveling. But we are grateful for your testimony. We learned a lot.

We will use the hearing as a way to consider policy in this area. If you have anything additional that you want to submit for the record, we will leave the record open for a couple of days at least.

Thank you very much, and that concludes our hearing.

[Whereupon, at 5:02 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY JEFFREY FELTMAN TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Even though Hezbollah's coalition lost parliamentary elections, they have now asserted effective control over major decisions within the new Lebanese Government. Lebanon's President Suleiman has expressed his support for Hezbollah, saying all the Lebanese are united behind the resistance and no one in Lebanon, especially the government, will harm the resistance's status. Hezbollah continues to amass greater quantities and qualities of offensive weapons, including in areas under the UNIFIL mandate. Hezbollah now has over 40,000 missiles and possibly now Scud missiles which can reach virtually anywhere in Israel. We have provided substantial assistance to the Lebanese Government and the Lebanese Armed Forces in the past and the President requested $100 million in military assistance and $30 million in security assistance for Lebanon for FY 2011.

- Given the central role Hezbollah plays in the Lebanese Government—the complete failure of the Lebanese Army to disarm internal militias; and the overall political stance taken by the Lebanese leadership vis-a-vis Hezbollah, an organization the United States categorizes as a terrorist entity—how do we manage our relations with the Government of Lebanon and not deal with Hezbollah? With the role Hezbollah plays throughout the government, what assurances can you give us that we aren't dealing with a terrorist organization? At what point, does the influence of Hezbollah taint the legitimacy of the overall government?

Answer. Our policy on Hezbollah remains unchanged. Hezbollah, in its entirety, is a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization and we have no contact with the group or any of its members. This policy will not change until this militant group disarms, renounces violence, and adheres to the authority of the Lebanese state.

As we've done in the past, in the two ministries run by a Hezbollah minister, we are able to pursue U.S. interests successfully by interacting with lower level civil servants at those ministries, while maintaining our no contact policy with Hezbollah officials.

Moreover, the United States uses vetting procedures, end-use monitoring of defense articles, and other controls to mitigate the risk that Hezbollah may receive direct or indirect benefits from U.S. assistance. In fact, our support to Lebanon's security services is designed to strengthen the authority of the Lebanese state as the sole decisionmaker on Lebanon's national security. In conjunction, our economic and development assistance helps Lebanon develop credible and transparent institutions, strengthen the role of civil society, support the independence and efficiency of the judicial system, and increase economic opportunities. Over the long term, these efforts provide credible alternatives to extremist groups, as we continue our support for the creation of a sovereign, independent, and stable Lebanon.

We believe that the Lebanese people deserve the opportunity to chart their own political course free from internal conflict and external interference, and that a strong, sovereign Lebanon will yield a more stable Middle East. The composition of the government is an issue for the Lebanese alone to decide. We will continue working with those partners in Lebanon who share our objectives of combating terrorism, implementing U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1559, 1680, and 1701, and expanding the state's authority over all of Lebanon's territory. Our strong support for Lebanon's state institutions is designed to support these goals.

Question. How will U.S. aid to Lebanon be affected in light of Hezbollah's growing role in the government? How do we provide Lebanon with assistance and ensure that it doesn't benefit or strengthen Hezbollah?

Answer. Our assistance is designed to strengthen Lebanon's independence and sovereignty by increasing the government's capacity to provide for the security and socioeconomic needs of its citizens. It is critically important that we continue this process to ensure the long-term stability of Lebanon and the region. Throughout this process, our vetting procedures, end-use monitoring of defense articles, and other controls mitigate the risk that Hezbollah may receive direct or indirect benefits from U.S. assistance.

Question. The FY 2010 appropriations bill included tight congressional oversight on the use of military assistance funds to Lebanon, making funds available only to professionalize the LAF, strengthen border security, interdict arms shipments, and

combat terrorism. Will the administration hold itself to the same guidelines and reporting requirements?

Answer. We will adhere to congressional reporting requirements.

Question. How would you assess the progress of the LAF's training and performance?

Answer. Our security assistance promotes the extension of Lebanese Government control throughout the country—especially in the south, along the border, and in Palestinian refugee camps—in accordance with U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1559, 1680 and 1701. Our engagement enhances the professionalism of Lebanese security forces, builds ties to Lebanon's political leadership, and reinforces civilian control of the military; we have seen concrete improvements in these areas. For example, the LAF has demonstrated on multiple occasions its cooperation with UNIFIL to respond, investigate and prevent incidents on the border with Israel, calming tensions.

The LAF is an active participant in U.S. service courses, and in FY09, over 130 students attended Officer Basic and Advanced courses, including Infantry, Field Artillery, and Armor classes. With the help of the United States, approximately 150 students to date have completed counterterrorism (CT)—relevant courses, such as Urban Operations and Long Range Marksmanship. The CT training helps the LAF cooperate with the United States in the fight against international terrorism by providing education and training to bolster the LAF's ability to detect, monitor, interdict, and disrupt terrorist activities. Over 200 LAF officers have attended Combating Terrorism Seminars, in which the key themes are defining threats, assessing national responses, strategies, and best practices for combating terrorism, and strategies for enhancing regional and national cooperation. The LAF also is working with CENTCOM to develop a long-term strategic plan.

We also must continue our efforts to prepare Lebanon's Internal Security Forces to successfully accomplish their mandate—to help build safe, secure communities and extend the rule of law to each of them. Without a strong ISF and LAF, Lebanon's existence as an independent and democratic state will be jeopardized, increasing the risk of instability in Lebanon and the region. That is a risk we cannot take.

Question. You have stated that there has been "no seriousness in implementing" Security Council Resolution 1701 which requires Hezbollah's disarming and sought to end weapons smuggling to Lebanon. Can the United States do anything to better enforce Resolution 1701? Do you still have faith in UNIFIL to carry out its mandate? What could be done to strengthen that mandate when UNIFIL's reauthorization comes before the United Nations?

Answer. Achieving full implementation of U.N. Security Council resolution 1701—including its call for Lebanon to establish a weapons-free zone in the south, secure its borders, and ensure that all weapons in Lebanon remain under the control of the Lebanese state and UNIFIL—remains a top priority for the United States. More must be done to implement this resolution and we will continue to urge further steps by Lebanon, Israel, and Syria. It is crucial that those states with ties to armed groups in Lebanon end their illegal supply of weapons and other material support, which continue to pose a danger to both Lebanon and the region.

President Sleiman and Prime Minister Hariri consistently reiterated their commitment to Resolution 1701, a commitment enshrined in the government's ministerial statement, and we look forward to continuing to work with them toward this goal. Specifically, we are urging Lebanon to take more assertive steps to combat weapons smuggling, enforce the weapons-free zone in the south, and begin the process of militia disarmament by implementing the 2006 and 2008 decisions of the National Dialogue to disarm Palestinian groups outside Lebanon's refugee camps.

Our security assistance and commitment to building strategic relationships with the Lebanese Army and police will continue to support these efforts, as has our financial support to UNIFIL. We have confidence in UNIFIL and its commander, Maj. Gen. Asarta Cuevas, who succeeded Maj. Gen. Claudio Graziano of Italy in January 2010. He has extensive and wide-ranging experience, including significant command expertise and prior experience with United Nations peacekeeping. UNIFIL, under its current Chapter VI mandate, remains the best available option to assist the LAF in taking steps toward keeping southern Lebanon free of unauthorized armed personnel, assets, and weapons. Ultimately, it also presents the best platform for the parties to move toward a permanent cease-fire and a long-term solution that includes the complete disarmament of all militias in Lebanon, including Hezbollah.

Question. We contributed $67.5 million to USAID's programs in Lebanon in 2009. USAID invested these funds in a range of areas that Lebanon has identified as pri-

orities including support for increasing democratic practices and promotion of the rule of law; strengthening civil society and education. These funds are part of a U.S. effort to strengthen the Lebanese Government in the face of Hezbollah. However, with Hezbollah taking on a greater role within the government and now with the recent reports of Syria transferring Scud missiles to Hezbollah, I wonder whether this assistance can have the desired effect.

- Are there willing partners that will take assistance from the U.S. Government? Do they have to conceal the United States as a source of their funding? Are we able to ensure the oversight through site visits and other inspections to ensure U.S. assistance is being used appropriately?

Answer. There are many individuals, groups, and communities willing to partner with us the United States Government in Lebanon.

USAID/Lebanon follows required agency directive—ADS 320, which provides policy and directives regarding "Branding and Marking." All missions must adhere to the procedures for branding and marking USAID-funded programs, projects, activities, public communications, and commodities, in order to identify them as assistance "from the American people." There are exceptions in the ADS when it is determined that branding would not in the best interest of the USG. Such a determination is made on a case-by-case basis. USAID/Lebanon has seen an increased ability over the past number of years in being able to brand and mark our programming in areas where previously it was difficult to do so.

USAID has full oversight of all of programs implemented in Lebanon and provides the appropriate level of inspection and site visits of activities implemented with USG economic assistance funding. USAID as well as Foreign Service National staff employed by the mission visit project activities and must report on site visits in accordance with audit and other requirements.

Question. What is the policy of USAID in working with a government whose members include representatives of a terrorist organization? Can you ensure that these funds do not benefit Hezbollah in any way? What safeguards are in place to ensure this?

Answer. USAID follows USG contact policy regarding Hezbollah. Should there be a need to work with a ministry whose minister is a Hezbollah member, USAID staff only engage that ministry at a lower, working level, maintaining our no contact policy with Hezbollah officials. Currently the Ministry of Agriculture is led by a Hezbollah-affiliated minister, and USAID has successfully developed our new programs to avoid any need to interact with this minister. To ensure that USAID is not funding any Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO), USAID utilizes a variety of vetting and certification procedures, such as: mandatory anticertification clauses within all assistance agreements, including grantees; checking all of our partner organizations against the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) public database and other relevant sources to determine that the recipient does not have ties to terrorist groups; requiring all nongovernmental recipients of assistance to sign antiterrorism certifications by which they certify that U.S. assistance will not be used to provide support or resources to terrorists; and requiring recipients to implement monitoring and oversight procedures to safeguard against U.S.-provided assistance being diverted to support terrorist activities.

Question. How much does USAID plan to spend in Lebanon next year? What specific projects do you expect to fund?

Answer. USAID's program in Lebanon for FY09 was $67.5 million and in FY10 will be $109 million. The FY 2011 request is $109 million. Within the new USAID 2009–2013 strategy, USAID seeks to "educate the youth and provide employment opportunities, so that Lebanese have an alternative to the lure of negative actors in Lebanon." USAID funds programs that target governing institutions and civil society organizations to be more responsive to Lebanese citizens by supporting the rule of law and providing technical support for the judiciary, supporting basic education for public schools, providing higher education scholarships, and training participants in transparency and accountability through grants. USAID also provides microfinance programs, private sector competitiveness programs, and supports environmental initiatives, such as reforestation and improvements in the water supply and sanitation infrastructure. A central component of these programs is USAID's focus on youth and reconciliation.

Question. What is the goal of USAID projects in Lebanon? Have USAID programs strengthened the forces of moderation in Lebanon?

Answer. A strong, stable, and secure Lebanon is critical to U.S. interests in the Middle East, including our pursuit of a comprehensive regional peace and efforts to

constrain Iranian influence in the region. In line with these objectives, USAID's programs support Lebanon's efforts to rebuild its sovereignty, develop democratic principles, and expand economic viability of the country. Under its Lebanon strategy, USAID is working to offer the Lebanese an alternative to the lure of negative actors, especially critical for at-risk populations such as youth and the unemployed. Over the long term, these efforts provide credible alternatives to extremist groups, such as Hezbollah. It is clear that both existing and future programs are strengthening the forces of moderation in Lebanon. The ability of these programs to expand into areas previously impenetrable is a clear indicator that we are meeting and exceeding our expectations to accomplish this goal. We continue to see increased support for USAID programs throughout Lebanon, including vulnerable areas in the North, Bekaa and the South. These programs are designed to adapt to the unpredictability of the political and security environment and to address the underlying causes of conflict, such as poor education standards and lack of employment after completion of education and poor governance.

Question. It is now widely reported and understood that Syria recently transferred more advanced missiles and weaponry to Hezbollah and, according to Israeli reports, Hezbollah crews may be training on Scud launchers in Syria. The missiles being discussed have a longer range and greater accuracy than those previously held by Hezbollah and would put the entire State of Israel in range. This provocative action by Syria raises very serious questions about President Assad's true intentions in the region and could force military conflict in the short term.

- What can you tell us about what the Syrians actually transferred to Hezbollah and when?

Answer. We have information confirming that Syria has transferred ballistic missiles to Hezbollah. This is a sensitive issue, and we would be happy to discuss any details beyond that in an appropriate venue.

Question. Do you believe such arms transfers could take place without the approval or consent of the Lebanese Government? What are Lebanon's responsibilities when it comes to stopping the flow of arms to Hezbollah?

Answer. Hezbollah has made no secret of its efforts to rearm since 2006, as noted by Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah who said, "For those who are still calling for disarming the resistance, I tell them this rhetoric is . . . useless." Hezbollah's efforts to rearm contravene a number of U.N. Security Council resolutions and the Taif accord, which brought an end to Lebanon's brutal civil war. Hezbollah continues and will continue to present a danger to Lebanon and the region's stability until it lays down its arms. All parties, whether in or neighboring Lebanon, must adhere to their obligations under the terms of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701—particularly the arms embargo—and continue to fully support the efforts of the Lebanese Government to implement these provisions, and of UNIFIL to support it.

Question. What steps will you take to ensure that Syria acts to stop the flow of arms to Hezbollah? Has the administration laid out the consequences to Syria if they continue this destabilizing behavior?

Answer. This is a sensitive issue, and we would be happy to provide additional details in an appropriate venue.

Question. Syria has had a chemical weapons program for many years and according to the Director of National Intelligence, has the capability to deliver chemical agents by plane, ballistic missile, and artillery rockets. Do we know whether Syria has transferred chemical weapons to Lebanon?

Answer. We are not aware of any state that has provided chemical weapons to a terrorist group. The Syrian Government knows that transferring a chemical weapon to Hezbollah would be a serious breach of its obligations under U.N. Security Council Resolution 1540.

Question. Given the range of the Scud missile and other armaments in Hezbollah's arsenal, does UNIFIL's mandate need to be extended to all of Lebanon to deal with these long-range weapons?

Answer. UNIFIL continues to play a crucial role in maintaining stability and preventing further Hezbollah attacks from southern Lebanon, such as those that sparked the 2006 war in Lebanon between Hezbollah and Israel. With a Chapter VI mandate, UNIFIL actively assists the LAF in taking steps toward keeping southern Lebanon free of armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL deployed in this area. Based on ongoing assessments by the U.N., we believe that UNIFIL has the tools needed to implement

its mandate. In fact, we are pleased that UNIFIL has grown more assertive in response to recent incidents in its area of operations.

While there is much more work to do before we can say that we have fully implemented Resolution 1701, it remains the best available blueprint for the parties to move from the current cessation of hostilities toward a permanent cease-fire and a long-term solution. As we saw during the devastating 2006 war with Israel, Hezbollah's successful disarmament cannot be brought about through military means and ultimately, will require a political decision by the Lebanese people themselves in favor of full disarmament of Hezbollah. This is most likely to happen in the context of the comprehensive regional peace we seek to achieve. As we work toward this goal, we also are continuing our efforts to support the Lebanese Government's development of an effective border control regime and the development of Lebanon's legitimate security services, the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces.

Question. How would you assess UNIFIL's performance since the last Lebanon war in stopping the flow of Syrian arms to Lebanon? It seems that they completely failed to stop the smuggling of rather large Scud missiles; it makes one wonder what else might Syria be sending into Lebanon?

Answer. With a Chapter VI mandate, UNIFIL actively assists the LAF in taking steps toward keeping southern Lebanon free of armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL deployed in this area. UNFIL has grown more assertive in response to incidents in its area of operations. For example, last December a UNIFIL patrol spotted men engaged in suspicious activity. UNFIL investigated and discovered 250 kg of explosives. The September 11, 2009, rocket firing into Israel from southern Lebanon was limited by prompt action by UNIFIL troops and the LAF. Fortunately, the rocket caused no casualties. UNFIL continues to play a crucial role in preventing violence along the Blue Line and attacks from southern Lebanon, such as those that sparked the 2006 war in Lebanon between Hezbollah and Israel. UNFIL has made steady progress to visibly mark the Blue Line. Sixty-nine points have been agreed on by the parties, with 40 markers already installed, and 23 markers under construction. UNFIL is providing engineering assets to assist the Lebanese Armed Forces in building a road parallel to the Blue Line, which will assist with patrolling and allow security forces to react more rapidly to incidents.

Due to the efforts of UNIFIL and the LAF, since 2006, the Blue Line has been stable and significantly quieter than in previous years. This is no small accomplishment. During this period, UNIFIL has registered a number of notable successes. First, UNIFIL has kept the peace by working closely with the LAF to fill the space in South Lebanon to prevent others, in particular, Palestinian rejectionist groups and Salafist offshoots, from having free reign to fire rockets toward Israel. In the handful of instances where we saw small missiles launched, UNIFIL moved quickly to respond and investigate, while continuing its efforts to work with the LAF to prevent additional incidents. UNIFIL continues to play a critical role in calming tensions, improving communication, and preventing escalation in the wake of incidents such as rocket firings, arrests of people crossing the border, or heated demonstrations on the border. Second, through the tripartite mechanism, UNIFIL continues to pursue serious negotiations over Israeli withdrawal from Ghajar. These negotiations, if successful, ultimately will show that diplomatic engagement can accomplish more than armed resistance. Finally, UNIFIL has made measurable progress in demarcating the Blue Line, a key component in maintaining stability south of the Litani.

We are able to provide additional information in an appropriate venue.

Question. The Cedar Revolution saw an end to Syria's occupation of Lebanon but, despite the exchange of ambassadors, Syria still meddles in Lebanese internal affairs. High-level Syrian officials have been implicated and there is suspicion that the Syrian intelligence service was directly involved in the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. Additionally, Syria continues to facilitate the smuggling of weapons across the border to Hezbollah, which is in direct violation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701.

- Have relations improved between Syria and Lebanon since the exchange of ambassadors?

Answer. We are pleased to see both Lebanon and Syria working to normalize their bilateral relations. We expect that Lebanon and Syria, as neighboring countries with strong familial and historic bonds, will have close ties; however, this relationship must be on equal footing. While the exchange of ambassadors last year was an important first step, much work remains to be done, especially in terms of border secu-

rity as outlined in Security Council Resolution 1701. During President Sleiman's June 2010 visit to Damascus, President Asad agreed to call on technical committees to continue gathering information with a view toward delineating the border as soon as possible.

Question. What is the state of the relationship today and what role does Syria now play inside Lebanon?

Answer. Lebanon held successful parliamentary elections in June 2009. These elections clearly demonstrated that the people of Lebanon continue to support those principles that guided the Cedar Revolution and Lebanon's march to independence in 2005. After roughly 5 months of negotiations, the Cabinet was formed in December. The municipal elections in May were another step forward. These were important steps, but Lebanon has much to overcome after decades of civil war and occupation. Our robust assistance to Lebanon, over $1 billion since 2006, is working to support this process by strengthening key state institutions improving their ability to meet the needs of Lebanon's citizens.

Syrian support for Hezbollah continues to be a major issue. More broadly, we continue to emphasize to Syria that any arms transfers to Hezbollah are a major problem. We believe that Syria's arming of Hezbollah presents a significant threat to regional stability. As Syria and Lebanon continue working to normalize their bilateral ties, Syria's full implementation of the arms embargo, as called for in UNSCR 1701 is essential. The United States supports the Government of Lebanon and its efforts to assert its complete authority throughout the entire country. We note the numerous U.N. Security Council resolutions, including Resolutions 1559 and 1680, and other international calls for the disarmament of all militias in Lebanon, including Hezbollah.

RESPONSES OF AUGUSTUS RICHARD NORTON TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question 1. You've previously stated that is actually becoming a moderate organization which has moved away from their activities in Iraq. With that in mind, what do you make of their networks in East Africa, as well as their attempt to commit terrorist acts in Azerbaijan and other countries?

- Given's and Iran's activities in Egypt, East Africa, and the Gulf of Aden, how do you read Hasan Nasrallah's recent threat to strike at Israel's Red Sea port?
- How do you explain that Sayyid ali al Amine, the Shia Mufti for south Lebanon, its major stronghold, is so critical of the terrorist organization?

Question 2. You've argued that was "Lebanonized." How do you explain Nasrallah's continued explicit declaration that he was a follower of the velayat-e faqih doctrine, which holds Iran's Supreme Guide to be a final and only arbiter on all matters related to Jihad, for example? Just the other day, at the memorial ceremony of the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, Nasrallah declared that there was a need to continue Khomeini's mission of spreading the ideas and values of the Islamic Revolution in the Arab and Islamic States. How do we reconcile these statements with "Lebanonization"?

Answers. I have characterized Hezbollah as a Janus-faced organization that combines a militant commitment to armed "resistance" while also participating in Lebanese sectarian political system. I have not described Hezbollah as a "moderate" group. In fact, I have described its involvement in terrorism, as well as its use of political violence. These perspectives may be found in my recent book ("Hezbollah: A Short History," Princeton University Press, 2009) and in a variety of other publications and presentations (for instance, see my 1999 Council on Foreign Relations occasional paper, "Hizballah of Lebanon: Extremist Ideals vs. Mundane Politics.")

Hezbollah's Janus-faced posture reflects the group's evolution since it was founded under Iranian tutelage in the early 1980s, following the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Two Israeli Prime Ministers, the late Yitzhak Rabin and the Ehud Barak, have reflected on the fact that it was Israel's invasion and occupation of Lebanon that provided a rationale for Hezbollah. This is important to note because it was precisely Hezbollah's skill in fighting the Israeli Army and Israel's proxy militia forces that helped the group gain credibility in Lebanon.

Over nearly three decades, the group has gained a much broader political base in Lebanon. This is for a number of reasons, including Hezbollah's success in creating an array of effective social and economic institutions. As Senator Corker noted in his comments during the subcommittee hearings on June 8, there are a number of Lebanese, Shi'a in particular, who share Hezbollah's worldview, and fully support

Hezbollah's argument that in the absence of a strong Lebanese Army they must depend on Hezbollah to deter Israel. My own research confirms that the 2006 war convinced many Lebanese Shi'a who had not been active supporters of Hezbollah that the group cared more about their needs than the Lebanese Government did.

Among the cadre of young militants who founded Hezbollah a common denominator was a commitment to the doctrine of the "Rule of the Jurisconsult (wilayat al-faqih in Arabic, or velayat-e faqih in Persian), the idea that highly qualified cleric should be the ultimate authority in an Islamic state. Therefore, their loyalty was directed to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Indeed, Hezbollah was explicitly committed to the establishment of a system of Islamic rule in Lebanon. To this day, Hezbollah officially considers the Ayatollah 'Ali Khamene'i (the successor to Khomeini) as their ultimate authority.

Yet, Hezbollah has to confront two realities in Lebanon: One is that there are 18 officially recognized sectarian groups in Lebanon and no single group constitutes a majority (the Shi'a comprise about one-third of the total population). Therefore, the feasibility of ever establishing an Islamic state in the country is very slim. This is a reality that has been publically acknowledged by key Hezbollah officials, including Hasan Nasrallah.

The second reality is that although Hezbollah enjoys broad support among Lebanese Shi'a, most Shi'a have no interest in living in an Islamic state modeled on Iran. This is quite obvious to anyone who has spent any time on-the-ground in Lebanon. In fact, while many Lebanese Shi'a support Hezbollah, most do not follow Ayatollah Khameine'i for religious guidance. The two most respected religious authorities for Lebanese Shi'a are Ayatollah 'Ali Sistani, based in al-Najaf, Iran, and Ayatollah Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, based in the southern suburbs of Beirut. Fadlallah, it should be noted, expressed early skepticism of transforming Lebanon into an Islamic state, and also openly challenged the religious credentials of 'Ali Khameine'i to provide religious guidance to Shi'i Muslims. (Fadlallah died on July 4, 2010. Since he was viewed as an open-minded and liberal thinker on a variety of topics, particularly women's issues, it is unlikely that followers will shift their loyalty to Khamene'i or even Sistani.)

In my testimony, I emphasized that the solidarity of the Lebanese Shi'i community is an artifact of the events of the past few years, and especially the 2006 war, which is widely understood by the Lebanese Shi'a as an attack on their community and its institutions. I also made the point that another war is likely to harden this communal solidarity, not weaken it.

In the 2009 Parliamentary elections, Hezbollah's Lebanese opponents, particularly in the Sunni Muslim community, were keenly effective in mobilizing anti-Hezbollah voters. I saw this myself in the city of Zahle and in the surrounding villages, where Sunni voters ensured that none of Hezbollah's electoral allies won any of the seven parliamentary seats that were at stake. There is no doubt that the Hezbollah-led incursion into West Beirut, in May 2008, hardened sentiments against Hezbollah, especially among the Sunnis. Nonetheless, among Shi'i voters, Hezbollah continued to attract impressive support.

I underlined that there are competing voices in the Shi'i community, but in the present environment those voices are subdued. Over the course of Hezbollah's political life, it sometimes fought bloody battles with its rival, Amal. In addition, there are certainly secular groups and individuals that would like to minimize the role of religion in public life. I know secular Shi'i Muslims in Lebanon (including some who live in the southern suburbs of Beirut, which is Hezbollah's stronghold) who are deeply contemptuous of Hezbollah and who resent the group's influence. Some senior religious authorities have sided with Amal rather than Hezbollah, and others have adopted a more independent stance. Senator Risch asks specifically about al-Sayyid 'Ali al'Amin, the former mufti in Tyre. There is no question that al-Amin has a small constituency, but he is in position to challenge Hezbollah, and he is not likely to be able to do so in the foreseeable future.

In my comments before the subcommittee I tried to emphasize that diverse voices are far more likely to emerge in an environment of reduced tension. So long as the threat of another war with Israel is visible on the horizon, Hezbollah's argument for its indispensability as a armed force is going to carry weight. (Of course, this also means that there is an incentive for Hezbollah to spark tension periodically.) I also expressed my skepticism of the Israeli military's capability to defeat Hezbollah, especially if wholesale destruction and slaughter in Lebanon is to be avoided.

Since the 1990s, Hezbollah's orientation to fighting Lebanon has revealed a logic of calculated escalation and deterrence that is familiar to strategic theorists. In effect, what has developed are "rules of the game" that are understood by Hezbollah and by its adversaries. These have been best analyzed by the Israeli scholar Daniel

Sobelman. In effect, what emerges is a system (formalized in 1993 and 1996) that promises retaliation if the opponent crosses "red lines." I understand Nasrallah's recent comments about attacking Israeli vessels in the Red Sea in that context.

The existence of these "rules" does not preclude miscalculation, which was dramatically illustrated in 2006 when Hasan Nasrallah and his colleagues miscalculated the Israeli response to the their cross-border raid to capture Israeli soldiers.

As for the role of Hezbollah's activities outside of Lebanon, notably in Iraq or Azerbaijan, a succinct answer is appropriate. In Iraq, the evidence clearly shows that Hezbollah elements have periodically collaborated with the IGRC in Iran-based training of insurgents, as well as equipping insurgents some Shi'i insurgents with deadly munitions. I am not in a position to evaluate whether those activities continue.

Detailed information on the 2008 incident in Azerbaijan is not available to my knowledge. There are some facts about the case that strike me as curious, especially the claim, by the Azerbaijan government that Hezbollah terrorists were working in cooperation with al-Qaeda, which I tend to doubt. It is certainly credible that the failed bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Baku was plotted as retaliation for the assassination of Imad Mughniyah.

I withhold judgment for now on the arrests and trials in Egypt. The Egyptian security courts are known for dispensing arbitrary justice, and Egyptian Government claims should be approached cautiously. President Mubarak was apparently incensed by the rhetorical provocations of Hasan Nasrallah during and after the 2006 war, and I see the trials as payback, Egyptian-style.

I thank Senator Risch for the opportunity to address his questions, as well as to further elaborate on the issues that I addressed in my testimony.

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