

THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS AT A CROSSROADS

HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11, 2003

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:40 a.m., Room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Henry J. Hyde (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Chairman HYDE. The Committee will come to order.

This morning, the Committee is pleased to receive testimony from the Honorable William Burns, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, on the Middle East Peace Process at a Crossroads.

One can search the world without profit in an effort to identify a situation that is more intractable, more defiant of resolution than that of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. An innocent might be excused from mistaking the problem as a good, if admittedly difficult, candidate for straightforward resolution. Many have made that error, assuming wrongly that the task is merely one of negotiating a compromise between tough opponents who nevertheless are bound by a mutual interest in peace and the prosperity it might be expected to ensure.

But this conflict defies such easy appeals to reason. Its path is littered with the abandoned remnants of once-hopeful plans and promises that are now largely forgotten.

All parties claim to want peace, and perhaps they do. But we must use the term cautiously. For the acceptable peace as defined by one party may well be irreconcilable with that of others, and some dream of a peace more terrible than that imposed by a vengeful Rome on prostrate Carthage.

Similarly, all wish for security, but the security of one is certain to be purchased at the cost of that of their opponents. Zero sum is a difficult context in which to negotiate compromise between warring partners, all of whom are confident of eventual victory on their own terms.

One might well ask why it is the United States must shoulder this burden. I can only reply that there is no one else to take our place, no one else who will even try. Only we possess the requisite power and resources, only we can engage all sides, only we can aspire to the trust of all, even if this latter goal has yet to become a firm reality.

But we also possess one other very important characteristic, one more intangible but nevertheless essential to the task we are vol-

untarily taking up. For it is a very American thing to believe that all problems have solutions. I am not at all certain that that is an accurate perception of reality, but that belief is a prerequisite for advancing toward so forbidding a prospect. I cannot think of another country—certainly none likely to shoulder any responsibility in the region—that would share our confident belief that the seemingly impossible is in fact possible. Yet, without it, there would be no reason even to begin, for we cannot prevail by predicting defeat.

The Administration's official announcement of a performance-based roadmap this past April is an ambitious attempt to create a viable accord among Israelis and Palestinians. The time for the President's new initiative is propitious. The elimination of Saddam Hussein's regime has removed a major contributor to the region's violence, removed an avowed enemy of peace who coldly calculated that his influence would be further expanded by chaos and bloodshed.

Outlining his vision of the Middle East at the Middle East summit in Aqaba last week with the Israeli and Palestinian Prime Ministers and King Abdullah of Jordan, President Bush stated,

“The journey we are taking is difficult, but there is no other choice. No leader of conscience can accept more months and years of humiliation, killing and mourning.”

The Administration deserves the full support of the Congress in its effort, and I am confident they will receive it. But we cannot make peace by ourselves, however fervent our determination. That responsibility lies in the hands of those in the region who are fated to live together forever, and they share that responsibility equally.

We are justified in seeing glimmers of hope. At the summit in Aqaba, Prime Ministers Abbas and Sharon pledged their commitment to a future in which Israelis and Palestinians would live side by side in peace and security. We cannot ask more of them in terms of aspirations. We ask only what they do as they have pledged, and we must not spare our efforts in helping them do so.

But if we are to sustain our optimism, it must be tempered with realism, not just the realism of grinding difficulty but also of scale. Progress can't be measured by artificial demarcations, for these are virtually certain not to be met. We must not hold up a chart by which to demonstrate an inexorable movement forward, for by doing so we might convince ourselves of failure.

Instead, progress must be calibrated in the smallest and most humble of scales. We must accept that there will be many reverses, many frail and false victories. In darker times, we may rightly see success in simply standing still. In our careworn age, to wait for a miracle to deliver us from our troubles might seem to be a foolish option, but I am afraid that something very much like that may prove necessary. All sides are certain to invoke the Divinity to realize their hopes or legitimize their hatred. But as Lincoln reminded us, the Almighty has his own purposes.

We must pray for assistance, but we cannot assume that it will descend upon us in our own time and to ends of our choosing. Instead, we must undertake our task with a hard-headed realism and a reliance on our own efforts. But in so bitter a conflict success will

require a secular miracle, if you will allow the term. Success will require that we mere mortals perform a miracle.

I have just been handed a note. Apparently, many people were killed in a bus bombing in Jerusalem just now.

In view of the fact that this hearing is largely the work of Chairwoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia, I will yield to her for an opening statement after I yield to Mr. Lantos, the Ranking Member. Following that, I will recognize Mr. Ackerman, the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee; and then we will hear from Ambassador Burns.

Other Members' statements will be entered into the record of the hearing at the appropriate point; and, of course, Members may use their question time to offer a comment or two by way of introduction.

So let me welcome Secretary Burns, of course. But I yield first to Mr. Lantos.

Mr. LANTOS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you for calling this important hearing, and I want to commend you for your thoughtful and statesmanlike opening statement.

I also want to commend our two colleagues, Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Congressman Ackerman, for their exemplary handling of this most important Subcommittee. I want to join you in welcoming Secretary Burns.

Mr. Chairman, these are momentous times in the Middle East. Our historic victory in Iraq has opened new opportunities, boosting the forces of democracy and dealing a severe blow to terrorists and tyrants throughout the region. The principal actors in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Prime Minister Abu Mazen, have vowed to seize this historic opportunity. These are hopeful developments.

On the Israeli side, Prime Minister Sharon has matched his words with actions. In recent weeks he has made sweeping concessions to the Palestinians, surprising supporters and critics alike. He has begun dismantling settlements. He has released scores of Palestinian prisoners who had been convicted of terrorist acts. He has reversed long-held official policy by calling Israel's presence in Gaza and the West Bank occupation; and, most importantly, Mr. Chairman, he has recognized the Palestinians' right to statehood.

Prime Minister Sharon has made a clear and courageous decision to accept the roadmap to Middle East peace. On the Palestinian side, Prime Minister Abbas has said hopeful words but failed utterly to match these words with action. Until he does, until he fights Palestinian terrorism with armed force, the new initiative to bring peace to the Middle East will be a roadmap to nowhere.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, some weeks ago I met with Abu Mazen face to face in his office in Ramallah. During a long, serious and substantive meeting, he spoke forcefully and with apparent conviction of the need to establish one and only one authority in the Palestinian territories, a view all rational people fully endorse. He condemned the murder of any Israeli under any circumstances. He acknowledged the historic suffering of the Jewish people, and he has repeated these words since, most recently at last week's summit meeting in Aqaba.

Tragically but predictably, the forces of terrorism are expressing their contempt for the works of Abu Mazen with cold-blooded and well-planned violence. I did not know of the bombing you just reported, but such events do not take place overnight. This most recent terrorist bombing must have been in the planning stage for weeks, if not months, just days after Aqaba, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the terrorists of Fatah, Arafat's own group, massacred five Israeli soldiers.

Now, Mr. Chairman, five Israeli soldiers are the equivalent of 250 American soldiers in relation to population. That is more than the total deaths we have suffered in Iraq, both during the war and since. One must understand Israel's outrage at this deliberate assassination of five young Israelis, and one must understand Israel's swift response.

I predicted violent rejectionism from Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist organizations when I met with Abu Mazen in Ramallah; and although it came sooner than many expected, the Palestinian Prime Minister's moment of truth has now arrived. Should he assert his authority and use force to dismantle Hamas and all the other Palestinian terrorist organizations, a Palestinian state awaits. Should he instead rely on rhetoric alone to combat terrorism, a Palestinian state will remain pure fiction. Will Abu Mazen rise to the occasion? The early indications are profoundly disappointing.

In the wake of Hamas's rejection and resort to terrorism, Abu Mazen condemned the violence but made it clear that there is no price to pay for terrorism, and I quote, "Dialogue with Hamas is the only way to achieve our goal." Apparently, the Palestinian Prime Minister has the delusion that he can confront and defeat terrorism with words, not with action.

This attitude, Mr. Chairman, is both naive and dangerous. As the United States has shown, force is the only answer to terrorism. If Abu Mazen is not willing to use force to combat Palestinian terrorism, if indeed he expressly vows not to use force as he has, then Israel has no choice but to use force itself.

As Abu Mazen himself has stated, there must be only one Palestinian Authority. By definition, a Palestinian state cannot exist if multiple armed authorities compete for control. An end to Palestinian terrorism is not only the first step, but it is the sine qua non of Palestinian statehood.

I believe, Mr. Chairman, it is not too late for Abu Mazen to make amends and crack down forcefully on terrorism. He will not defeat Hamas overnight. He should begin in northern Gaza where his forces are the strongest and gradually work south to secure the entire Gaza Strip. With such a foothold, he can begin to rid the West Bank of terrorism one city at a time. Asserting his authority against terrorism one battle at a time is the key to unlocking the promise of a Palestinian state.

Abu Mazen can also take another immediate step on another battlefield in the fight against terrorism. During our meeting, I challenged the Palestinian Prime Minister to use his bully pulpit and the Palestinian Authority's uncontested influence over the Palestinian media to end the insidious anti-Israeli incitement that pollutes the prospects for peace. I note, Mr. Chairman, with regret

that Palestinian newspapers have continued to glorify suicide bombers for their so-called acts of self sacrifice and terrorism. Abu Mazen has yet to answer this challenge.

Mr. Chairman, I honestly believe Abu Mazen is a well-intentioned leader whose moment of truth has arrived, and his moment of truth is the roadmap's moment of truth as well. In the coming days and week, we will see the response of Abu Mazen and the Palestinian Authority, and only then will we know whether the roadmap will lead to peace or to nowhere.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman HYDE. Thank you, Mr. Lantos.

The Chairwoman, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Lantos for your remarks; and we welcome Secretary Burns to our hearing today. Thank you.

As we approach the anniversary of President Bush's seminal address on peace in the Middle East, we are reminded that we stand at the precipice of a momentous opportunity, one unlike any other in the recent past. The Aqaba Summit encapsulated this immense potential to rebuild trust, to restart direct negotiations, and to promote progress toward a lasting, mutually beneficial and a mutually acceptable solution.

We have learned the lessons of history, and, thus, the current path will not be the Oslo process. We will not allow terrorists and those who empower and protect them to obstruct the road to peace, and this refers specifically to Yasser Arafat. Leaders who seek peace and truly care about their people make the necessary sacrifices, including risking their own political and professional future for the sake of peace. Conversely, those who only care about personal power are called tyrants.

Arafat's actions, including his recent maneuvers to protect his loyalists by issuing a presidential decree removing the regional governors from the authority of the Interior Ministry to his own office, clearly demonstrate that he falls into the latter category. By resorting to violence and terrorism to achieve political objective, Arafat has brought severe hardship to his own people and has brought a halt to efforts to achieve a lasting peace.

Arafat must be removed from the equation, must be marginalized, if Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas or Abu Mazen, Security Minister Mohammed Dahlan and the new Palestinian cabinet are to have any hope of negotiating a mutually acceptable solution with the Israelis.

The challenges facing Abu Mazen are formidable enough without having to face the continued interference and meddling of individuals, such as Arafat, who have squandered countless opportunities to make peace.

As President Bush has repeatedly articulated, peace requires a new and different Palestinian leadership so that a Palestinian state can be born. A Palestinian state will never be created by terror. It will be built through reform, and reform must be more than cosmetic change.

The U.S. Congress wishes to support and empower the new Palestinian leadership, a policy articulated in the Foreign Relations Authorization bill recently passed by our Committee. In this provi-

sion, we underscore the United States willingness to provide substantial economic and humanitarian assistance and to support large-scale multilateral assistance, after the Palestinians have achieved the reforms outlined by President Bush and have achieved peace with the state of Israel.

Today's session seeks to address some of the specific reforms and requirements. Primordial among these is the renunciation of terror and a demonstrable, verifiable effort by the Palestinian leadership to combat such terrorism.

An end to terror must be unconditional and complete. There cannot be a quid pro quo with regard to the secession of terrorist attacks. Only the full implementation—not just a presentation but the implementation of a comprehensive antiterrorism plan aimed at destroying these organizations will serve as a catalyst for congressional support for any roadmap to peace.

Palestinians must commit to ending terrorism and arresting and holding the terrorists, not releasing them shortly afterwards. The terrorists' weapons must also be confiscated. Half measures will not work. Progression must be performance-based, and the commitment must be concrete.

We are not operating within the same context as before. Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom underscored our commitment to eradicating terrorism as a global threat to stability, security and peace. The Middle East Partnership Initiative, combined with our efforts to create a Middle East Free Trade Area, clearly demonstrate our focus on freedom and prosperity for all of the region. We have taken the initiative. The choice is now that of the individual Arab governments, just as the onus which is now on the Palestinian leadership.

We are gratified by the statements of the Palestinian Prime Minister and have noted these in the Foreign Relations Authorization Bill. In our bill we highlighted his remarks prior to the vote of the Palestinian Legislative Council, when Mr. Abbas declared:

“We denounce terrorism by any party in all of its forms, both because of our religious and moral traditions and because we are convinced that such methods do not lend support to a just cause like ours but rather destroy it.”

At the Aqaba Summit, Abu Mazen reiterated his renunciation of terrorism and acknowledged that terrorism is a dangerous obstacle to the achievement of an independent sovereign state that the Palestinians seek.

However, just 2 weeks prior, on May 21st, the Prime Minister was quoted as saying in an interview with Egypt's semi-official weekly that:

“Arafat is a man to whom we refer. We do not do anything without his approval. We will not allow any serious differences between Arafat and me.”

These remarks by the Palestinian Prime Minister, combined with a policy of negotiation with terrorist groups such as Hamas, which refuses to put down its weapons, raises grave concerns to us.

As the Chairman noted, in the *New York Times* wire service, it says,

“An explosion ripped through a bus in downtown Jerusalem on Wednesday, killing several passengers and wounding dozens others. There was no immediate claim of responsibility. However, the Islamic militant group Hamas has threatened to take bloody revenge for a botched attack by Israel on one of its leaders.”

So it calls into question the implementation and the verification of this roadmap. What is the Palestinian Prime Minister doing for monitoring mechanisms? What is his security plan, and what is the role of the U.S. intelligence agencies in the roadmap?

At last week’s summit, President Bush stated that the U.S. would provide training and support to a new Palestinian security apparatus. We hope to delve into specific areas such as the efforts undertaken to ensure that the new Palestinian security system will have clear lines of authority and accountability and chain of command issues.

What type of assistance is the U.S. providing? Are we involved in reported efforts by Palestinian Security Minister Dahlan to buy illegal weapons carried by militants linked to the Fatah movement? Are these reports referring to weapons buy-back programs? Are those correct? And who are the recipients of our assistance or participants in any of these training programs? What criteria are being used to ensure that those with terrorist ties are not part of the security apparatus? Is the manipulation of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine (UNRWA) facilities for terrorist purposes being addressed within the security discussions and, if so, how?

In authorizing legislation, my colleagues and I noted that it is the sense of the Congress that the Administration should work vigorously toward the goal of the two states living side by side in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries, free from the threats or acts of force. Many of us view such a solution as calling for a Jewish state of Israel existing next to a democratic Palestinian state devoid of terrorism, a view echoed by the President last week in his remarks following the summit meeting. And this segues into discussions about refugees and the “right of return,” about the outposts and the settlements, the status of Jerusalem and the process by which boundaries will be determined.

While there are divergent views in the Congress on these specific items, a majority of my colleagues and I firmly believe that the roadmap must serve as a vehicle for the implementation of the principles clearly set forth in the President’s June 24th address, principles that the Israeli Prime Minister accepted before the publication of any roadmap and that the Palestinian Prime Minister noted in his remarks last week in the summit.

This hearing will also address the role of the new U.S. envoy and the coordinating team and what role, if any, other members of the quartet will play in this effort, and what role Arab leaders such as King Abdullah of Jordan will play.

And I would like to thank the king of Jordan for his assistance. He, as his father before him, has proven to be a man committed to peace. We hope that Jordan’s example will serve to motivate others into following a similar path. Ultimately, our hope is that the dream of peace and security will become a reality.

Today's hearing will be the first of many as we move along the path toward fulfillment of that goal. We welcome Assistant Secretary of State Burns for his participation in the Aqaba Summit and look forward to his testimony today.

Chairman HYDE. Mr. Ackerman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much.

The recent developments in the Middle East have given many of us hope for resumption of peacemaking; and, like all of my colleagues, I am anxiously eager to hear from Secretary Burns.

Mr. Chairman, we are at a very critical moment in the history of Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The past years and months of painful violence have proven certain truths. Israel cannot continue as a Jewish democratic state if it continues to administer an area where several million Palestinians live, and the Palestinians cannot achieve their legitimate national aspirations through barbaric acts of indiscriminate mass murder, such as the one that took place, as Chairman Hyde was gaveling this Committee to order, where over 30 people were either wounded or killed on Jaffa Road across from the Kallah Center.

The emergence of Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas as a serious interlocutor has set into motion a series of positive events, culminating in the summits last week in Sharm al-Sheikh and Aqaba. Perhaps most importantly, people around the world are once again beginning to believe in the possibility of peace.

Our attention at this point in time should not be on the intractable issues such as a final status agreement, but on the pressing needs of this moment in time, and here I believe, with regard to Abu Mazen, two factors stand out. First, behind him he has the father of Palestinian nationalism, a godfather-like figure irreparably stained with violence whose rule has been an unadulterated disaster for the Palestinian people. Since Abbas won approval of his government, Arafat has attempted at every turn to undermine him, to counter his efforts and to call into question his credibility as an interlocutor.

Second, in front of him he has the multiplicity of Palestinian terrorist groups who are committed to the destruction of Israel and the perpetuation of violence at all costs. For these groups, a cease-fire—read that, a temporary cessation of violence—would be heaven-sent, as it would allow them to reform, to reorganize, to resume their attacks at their own convenience.

Mr. Chairman, every one of our Arab and European partners acknowledges the challenges facing Abu Mazen. Every one of them admits Arafat is no partner for peace, and if given the chance to write his own peace agreement he would then hand it to himself and then reject it.

Each of our partners in the Middle East and the quartet will agree that Palestinian terrorist groups are committed to blowing up the nascent peace process, together with as many innocent Israelis as they can manage.

The obligations of the two parties are laid out in the roadmap, which as the United States has made clear time and again is based on performance and not arbitrary timetables. But the two parties cannot succeed without the assistance of the international commu-

nity, and it is here that positive rhetoric has not yet been matched by action.

Three steps are urgently needed:

First, Arafat is a failed leader. We all know it. He may be a beloved living legend among Palestinians, but he is no partner for peace. Every state committed to peace needs to limit its contacts with him to an absolute bare minimum; and, simultaneously, every effort should be made to help increase Abu Mazen's credibility and stature.

Second, a terrorist is a terrorist is a terrorist. Palestinian terrorists are no different from other terrorists. They need to be utterly crushed. There can be no differentiation of terrorism against Israel from terrorism against America or terrorism against India or any other kind of terrorism against anybody else. Rationalizing Palestinian terrorism reeks of bigotry and undermines the global war on terror. The time has come for our partners to treat these murderous thugs as they deserve. These groups must be outlawed around the world, and no differentiation between their various wings should be tolerated.

Finally, the Palestinian people are in very dire circumstances, and there is an understandable desire around the world to provide them with assistance, but we must be discerning. It is absolutely critical that no aid intended for the Palestinian people be diverted to the charitable branches of terrorist groups or into the corrupt hands of Yasser Arafat. The Palestinian Authority Finance Minister Salam Fayyad has demonstrated his commitment to transparency and good governance, and I for one believe the time has come to work out appropriate mechanisms to enable assistance to be channelled through his office.

As many of you know, Ms. Ros-Lehtinen and Mr. Lantos have joined me in preparing a letter to the President on the urgency of these points. It is in front of the Members here in the Committee, and that letter will be sent in almost the same form to other members of the quartet and the Arab League. I urge Members of the Committee to add their names to these letters.

Mr. Chairman, peace may be possible, but it is by no means automatic. We heard all the right words last week. The question is whether in the weeks to come we will see that the deeds are matched to the words.

I look forward to hearing from Ambassador Burns.

Chairman HYDE. Thank you, Mr. Ackerman.

If other Members have an opening statement, it will without objection be made a part of the record at this point.

We welcome today as our witness the Honorable William Burns, who is Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. He is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, with the rank of Minister-Counselor. He has served for over 20 years in positions in Washington, from various bureaus of the State Department to the National Security Council, as well as in numerous overseas posts, including serving as Ambassador to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Ambassador Burns holds a Ph.D. in philosophy from Oxford University.

We are pleased to have you appear before us today, Mr. Ambassador, and we ask, if possible, for you to summarize your testimony. Your full statement will be made a part of the record.

Ambassador Burns.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE WILLIAM J. BURNS, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. BURNS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I really am delighted to be with all of you today, and I appreciate very much the opening statements made by you and by your colleagues.

President Bush's meetings last week in Sharm al-Sheikh and Aqaba, as many of you have already emphasized, captured the attention of the region and much of the world. We saw emerging there a new, hopeful dynamic that has been sorely missed for the past 2½ years or more.

I would like to speak briefly today about what the President achieved in those meetings, where we stand now and some of the very real challenges we still face, and then as I said, I would be delighted to try and answer your questions.

To appreciate the accomplishments of Sharm al-Sheikh and Aqaba, it is very important to keep in mind how we got there. The foundations of these meetings were nearly a year in the making. The President's June 24th, 2002, speech presented a new diplomatic path, a challenge really to the parties and the states of the region.

President Bush laid out a set of basic principles that would guide the new diplomatic effort. These included a new Palestinian political leadership free of ties to terror, the active engagement of regional states to assist in that transformation and a real commitment, backed up by action, from all sides to the President's two-state vision. Over the following 6 months, the President and Secretary Powell worked hard to bring the parties, the regional states and the international community together into a common framework, a roadmap to realize the June 24th vision and eventually to achieve a real peace.

One key element of these efforts has been their regional scope. The President called for a new, committed regional approach that would require all the states of the region to shake off old complacencies about the conflict, and nothing has shaken those complacencies more than the fall of Saddam Hussein's tyrannical and destabilizing regime.

We have seen important political change on the Palestinian side, with the creation of a new Palestinian Prime Minister committed to peace, and we have seen a ferment of new political activity and calls for change not only in Iraq but elsewhere in the region. These strands have come together now at what the President has called a "hopeful moment."

In Sharm al-Sheikh and Aqaba, the President moved to seize this moment. In Sharm al-Sheikh, we saw a remarkable meeting between Arab heads of state and a new emerging Palestinian leadership committed to peace. That transformation is still very much an ongoing process, but the meeting itself and the collective Arab commitments there gave this process an important boost.

The Arab heads of state committed themselves to supporting Palestinian reform, including the creation of democratic and accountable institutions. They also committed to working together to end all forms of support for terrorist organizations, including financial support, and to, in their words, “reject the culture of extremism and violence.”

Equally important, the Sharm al-Sheikh statement included a collective acknowledgment of the need for regional change to build representative political institutions, to open markets, seek broader trade and enhance economic opportunities for all the region’s peoples.

In Aqaba, at an event hosted by King Abdullah, President Bush brought Prime Minister Sharon and Prime Minister Abbas together for a three-way meeting that was candid, frank and remarkably free of the rancor and rhetoric that has too often characterized such encounters. Both sides made very clear commitments to the President’s vision and, most importantly, acknowledged their own responsibilities and obligations to achieve it.

In his statement, Prime Minister Abbas made an unambiguous renunciation of terror and called for the armed intifada to end. He acknowledged Jewish suffering throughout history and made an important commitment to work vigorously against incitement to violence and hatred. Prime Minister Sharon spoke with admirable clarity in support of the President’s vision. A democratic Palestinian state, he said, fully at peace with Israel, will promote the long-term security and well-being of Israel. He made commitments to improve the humanitarian situation of Palestinian and respect their dignity, and he made important statements that support the real possibility of a two-state solution, including an acknowledgment of the importance of territorial contiguity and an undertaking to dismantle unauthorized settlement outposts.

There have been positive statements before, too often not followed up with action. Even so, I would suggest that the angry reactions of the avowed enemies of peace are one indication that there was something different happening here. There is a key theme, too often missing in the past, that has characterized President Bush’s diplomatic efforts from the outset, and that is accountability.

The President has made clear that all sides have obligations to take steps for peace, the United States included, and that each side must accept those obligations and be accountable for them. In short, they must perform. That is why the President also announced the creation of a U.S. coordinating and monitoring mission on the ground, led by Ambassador John Wolf, to help Israelis and Palestinians move ahead and monitor their performance.

The President emphasized his personal commitment to these principles, and the parties responded. That was the key to the progress that was made at Sharm al-Sheikh and Aqaba.

We have to be clear-eyed about the problems we face. The enemies of the President’s vision are determined and strong, and the violence of the past week, indeed the violence of the past few hours, is a vivid reminder of that reality. We condemn such despicable acts in the strongest possible terms, and we must all fight decisively against terror and violence. There is simply no other way forward.

Despite these challenges and despite these obstacles, President Bush has made absolutely clear his determination that the United States will be there to help the parties move as quickly as possible to take advantage of the best opportunity that they have had and we have had in a very long time.

Thank you very much, and I would be delighted to respond to your questions.

Chairman HYDE. Thank you, Ambassador Burns.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Burns follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE WILLIAM J. BURNS, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm very pleased to be here today. President Bush's meetings last week in Sharm al-Sheikh and Aqaba captured the attention of the region and much of the world. We saw emerging there a new, hopeful dynamic that has been sorely missed for the past two and one half years or more. I would like to speak briefly today about what the President achieved in those meetings, where we stand now, and some of the real challenges we still face, and then I will be glad to try to answer your questions.

To appreciate the accomplishments of Sharm al-Sheikh and Aqaba, it is important to keep in mind how we got there. The foundations of these meetings were nearly a year in the making. The President's June 24, 2002 speech presented a new diplomatic path—a challenge really—to the parties and the states of the region. President Bush laid out a set of basic principles that would guide the new diplomatic effort. These included a new Palestinian political leadership free of ties to terror, the active engagement of regional states to assist in that transformation, and a real commitment, backed up by action, from all sides to the President's two-state vision. Over the following six months, the President and Secretary Powell worked to bring the parties, the regional states, and the international community together into a common framework—a roadmap—to realize the June 24 vision and achieve a real peace.

One key element of these efforts has been their regional scope. The President called for a new, committed regional approach that would require all the states of the region to shake off old complacencies about the conflict. And nothing has shaken those complacencies more than the fall of Saddam's tyrannical and destabilizing regime. We have seen important political change on the Palestinian side, with the creation of a new Palestinian Prime Minister committed to peace, and we have seen a ferment of new political activity and calls for change not only in Iraq but elsewhere in the region. These strands have come together now at what the President has called a "hopeful moment."

In Sharm al-Sheikh and Aqaba, the President moved to seize this moment. In Sharm al-Sheikh, we saw a remarkable meeting between Arab heads of state and a new emerging Palestinian leadership committed to peace. That transformation is still very much an ongoing process. But the meeting itself, and the collective Arab commitments there, gave this process an important boost. The Arab heads of state committed themselves to supporting Palestinian reform, including the creation of "democratic and accountable institutions." They also committed to working together to end all forms of support for terrorist organizations, including financial support, and to, in their words, "reject the culture of extremism and violence." Equally important, the Sharm al-Sheikh statement included a collective acknowledgement of the need for regional change, to build representative political institutions, to open markets, seek broader trade, and enhance economic opportunities for all the region's peoples.

In Aqaba, at an event hosted by King Abdullah, President Bush brought Prime Minister Sharon and Prime Minister Abbas together for a three-way meeting that was candid, frank, and remarkably free of the rancor and rhetoric that has too often characterized such encounters. Both sides made very clear commitments to the President's vision, and most importantly, acknowledged their own responsibilities and obligations to achieve it. In his statement, Prime Minister Abbas made an unambiguous renunciation of terror and called for the armed intifada to end. He acknowledged Jewish suffering "throughout history" and made an important commitment to work vigorously against incitement to violence and hatred. Prime Minister Sharon spoke with admirable clarity in support of the President's vision: "A democratic Palestinian state," he said, "fully at peace with Israel, will promote the long-term security and well being of Israel." He made commitments to improve the hu-

manitarian situation of Palestinians and respect their dignity. And he made important statements that support the real possibility of a two state solution, including an acknowledgement of the importance of territorial contiguity, and an undertaking to begin dismantling unauthorized outposts.

There have been positive statements before, too often not followed up with action. Even so, I would suggest the angry reactions of the avowed enemies of peace are one indication that there was something different happening here. There is a key theme, too often missing in the past, that has characterized President Bush's diplomatic efforts from the outset: accountability. The President has made clear that all sides have obligations to take steps for peace, the United States included, and that each side must accept those obligations, and be accountable for them. In short, they must perform. That is why the President also announced the creation of a U.S. coordinating and monitoring mission on the ground, led by Ambassador John Wolf, to help Israelis and Palestinians move ahead and monitor their performance.

The President emphasized his personal commitment to these principles, and the parties responded. That was the key to making Sharm al-Sheikh and Aqaba a success. We have to be clear-eyed about the problems we face. The enemies of the President's vision are determined and strong, and the violence of the past week shows they can still act. But President Bush was clear that we will be there to help the parties move as quickly as possible to take advantage of the best opportunity we have had in a long time.

Thank you. I'll be glad to take your questions.

Chairman HYDE. Mr. Lantos.

Mr. LANTOS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We just received a report that nine innocent Israeli civilians were killed in this latest terrorist attack, 40 injured, many seriously.

Mr. Secretary, as you know, yesterday Chairman Hyde, Chairman Lugar of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the Ranking Member Senator Biden and I had a long and very positive and constructive and substantive meeting with Dr. Condi Rice, the National Security Adviser.

I will not report one word of what anybody said at that meeting, except what I said, because I said the same thing privately and publicly, and I am asking you to answer it. There is not the slightest doubt in my mind of the motivation of the Administration. It is of the highest order. You want peace and security. You want two, hopefully, democratic states living side by side. But I do have questions about the logic of the Administration's policy, and I hope that, with your Oxford Ph.D., you will be able to assist me.

The terrorist groups are on record, and their actions certainly support their statements, that they will use terrorism until they win. The terrorist's chief, whom the Israelis attempted to finish off yesterday, again repeated this statement after this episode.

Now, the notion that Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other Palestinian terrorist organizations can be reasoned with, talked to, negotiated with seems to me to be an absurdity, no less of an absurdity than to negotiate with Osama bin Laden. We saw the results of attempting to negotiate with Osama bin Laden. Two thousand of our fellow citizens in New York paid with their lives for that episode.

There are basically two entities that can use physical force to destroy the terrorists. It is either the newly constituted Palestinian Authority or the Israeli defense forces. Abu Mazen is on record saying he will not use force. Since he is on record saying he will not use force, I have difficulty comprehending our goal of building up his security forces, because, according to his statement, those will not be used to defeat the terrorists. And if Abu Mazen and the Palestinian Authority either today or in the future are unprepared to

use force to destroy the terrorists, physically destroy the terrorists, take away their weapons so there will be only one police entity within the territory of the Palestinian Authority, then Israel clearly will do so. We would do so. Any self-respecting society would do so. People in government have to defend their citizens.

What is the logic of the Administration's position in critiquing self-defense, when in fact our own policy in recent years has been predicated on precisely those same notions, with one important distinction, that for Israel, self-defense means defending a country which is less than 10 miles wide. In our case, self-defense meant destroying the Taliban in faraway Afghanistan. I would be grateful if you would explain the logic which criticizes a democratic government for exercising self-defense, which we properly claim to have a right to do for ourselves.

Mr. BURNS. Mr. Lantos, let me try and respond as best I can.

First, it is very clear that the goal has to be the decisive defeat, the disarming, the demobilization, the dismantling of terrorist infrastructure.

Mr. LANTOS. May I just stop you there for a minute?

Mr. BURNS. Yes, sir.

Mr. LANTOS. Do you anticipate this to be achieved through persuasion?

Mr. BURNS. I think it will have to be achieved with whatever means are necessary to achieve it. I don't think personally that persuasion alone is going to result in that outcome, but I think the goal is very clear. I think what Prime Minister Abbas had to say, for example, in Aqaba was quite clear about the end point and about the importance of ending the armed intifada.

What the President made clear is that we are determined—we the United States—to do everything we can to support that goal, and that includes helping to rebuild transformed and reformed Palestinian security services, again with a very clear view of what the end point must be. And that is, again, as you emphasized, one authority for Palestinians, which is after all not a favor to us or to Israelis or to anyone else but deeply in the self-interest of Palestinians themselves as the only solid foundation for statehood.

Mr. LANTOS. May I just engage you in a dialogue on that point for a moment?

Mr. BURNS. Surely.

Mr. LANTOS. Abu Mazen yesterday vowed—and the word is vow—that he will not use force. Is that a rational position from the point of view of the Administration in the face of the continued terrorist attacks by Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Fatah terrorists?

Mr. BURNS. Well, I think there are two issues here, Mr. Lantos. The first is there can be no doubt about the end point, and there can be no doubt that whatever means are required to achieve that end point, which is to say the complete dismantling of terrorist infrastructure, are going to have to be employed.

Mr. LANTOS. Including the use of force?

Mr. BURNS. Yes, sir. But there is a second issue, and that has to do with capabilities today. And as the President said publicly, we recognize that that goal, that very clear goal is not going to be achieved overnight. It is going to require an effort to help rebuild the capacity to ensure that it is achieved. It is going to require

steps along the way, consistent with the existing and hopefully improving capacity of the Palestinian services, and you mentioned yourself, sir, in your comments some examples of that, whether it is in parts of Gaza or the West Bank. That is something that we are encouraged that Israelis and Palestinians have begun to talk directly to one another about.

But it is very important to keep in mind the end point and to work decisively in that direction so that every step that is taken along the way is designed clearly to achieve that goal, and that is the very straightforward and plain-spoken position of the Administration.

Chairman HYDE. Ms. Ros-Lehtinen.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Ambassador.

Is the Administration considering the provision of direct assistance to the Palestinian Authority? And, if so, what would it be for, and on what basis would you make the case that the provision of this assistance is in the national security interest of the United States and especially in light of all of the terrorism that continues against the Israelis?

I will just ask the questions I have and let you respond in the time.

I wanted to ask what the role would be of the quartet on security issues on the roadmap. Will the quartet members, other than the U.S., judge whether progress is being made on the security front? Who will decide when and whether the process can move forward from one phase to the other? And under the current cooperative agreements, what safeguards are in place to ensure that we will not experience a remilitarization of the West Bank and Gaza by the Palestinian Authority under the rubric of fighting terrorism? Is there an agreement on the issue of the new Palestinian state being fully demilitarized and with no military forces but with police and internal security forces of limited scope and armaments?

Mr. BURNS. Yes, ma'am. Let me try and respond to each of those questions.

On the question of direct assistance, as you know, our policy—and we have consulted about this quite frequently with Members of Congress—is that we do not provide as an Administration, as a government, direct assistance to the Palestinian Authority. We work through NGOs, we work through contractors, and that remains our policy.

Now, I would note, however, the very important progress that the new Palestinian Minister of Finance Salam Fayyad has made, demonstrating a great deal of courage in doing so, in producing a much more accountable and transparent management of the Palestinian Authority's finances. That has been acknowledged by, among others, the Israeli government, which has in recent months begun to provide tax revenue to the Palestinian Authority through Mr. Fayyad as well as to accelerate the repayment of arrearages which has built up as well. And that is a mark, I believe, of the Israeli government's confidence in the kind of steps that Mr. Fayyad is taking.

It is also noteworthy that the European Union is funneling its assistance directly through Mr. Fayyad, and several Arab states in-

cluding Saudi Arabia are doing the same thing with their official assistance. So that is a mark of progress.

There may come a time when we will want to review, as Mr. Ackerman suggested, the way in which we provide our direct assistance. We have not come to that point yet, but we will certainly consult carefully with you when and if we come to that point.

The second issue you raised, ma'am, with regard to the quartet monitoring and security, it is fair to say that the members of the quartet and other players in the region, including Arab states, have significant contributions to make in the broad effort to realize the President's June 24th vision. One of the things the President has stressed is that everybody has obligations. They are all going to have to perform them.

With regard, however, to security, I think the truth is that the United States has a unique role to play here because of our relationship with Israel, because of our relationship with Palestinians; and when we look at the issue of monitoring security commitments, that is very much something that the United States will have to undertake.

When it comes to the question of what judgments are made with regard to monitoring, again, I think the truth is that very strong U.S. leadership is going to be required, and we will see a U.S.-led effort across the board with regard to monitoring. But I believe that is particularly true with regard to security.

Finally, with regard to the question of looking ahead to the possibility and the likelihood of a Palestinian state emerging, the issues that you raise, ma'am, with regard to the role of police forces and militaries I think are something that are obviously going to have to be subject to negotiation between the two parties. There are some very real questions about how those issues are resolved, and that is going to have to be something that Israelis and Palestinians talk directly to one another about and resolve.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

I don't know if I have any time for another question?

Chairman HYDE. You are down to a whisper.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Okay. The whisper. The U.S. team; if you could tell us the makeup of the team. I know Ambassador John Wolf has recently been named to head the team. Can you tell us what the specific mission will be as well, and will it be comprised solely of U.S. personnel?

Mr. BURNS. Yes, ma'am. We are talking about an American team, to answer your last question first. We are talking about a team that, at the outset, would be composed of roughly 7 to 10 members, led by Ambassador Wolf, charged with coordinating and monitoring implementation of the commitments that Palestinians and Israelis have made, with a particular focus on the roadmap and promoting progress between them.

The team will include specialists in security areas who can play a role in encouraging direct communication between the two parties as well as in monitoring their commitments; and it could include specialists in other areas as well, including the question of incitement and media issues as well about which Prime Minister Abbas had some important things to say in Aqaba.

I guess what I would also stress with regard to the team's efforts is that the President is absolutely determined to remain personally engaged in this effort. He made that clear in Sharm al-Sheikh and in Aqaba. I am certain that is what you will see in the weeks and months ahead. He also called upon Secretary Powell and Dr. Rice to put this at the top of their priority list, so I think you will see their active engagement. The same is true of myself and my counterpart at the NSC staff, Mr. Abrams, and we have worked very closely together in recent weeks and will continue to.

Then on the ground what you will see is the mission—the full-time, on-the-ground presence led by Ambassador Wolf, working very closely with our Embassy in Tel-Aviv and our consulate in Jerusalem. So at each level of this process you are going to see real proof of the President's determination to do everything we can to move ahead.

Again, the parties themselves are going to have to perform if progress is to be made, but it is not going to be for lack of effort or commitment on the American side.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman HYDE. Ambassador, it seems to me there are some things that can be done, even without resorting to violence, although that has to always be something available when necessary. But if you depopularize the bombers, the rejectionists, by performing public works, getting public works for the people so that they understand their future lies with the legitimate governments, not with the bombers, I think you have to be very careful when you retaliate—if that word is appropriate—to narrow the scope so that you don't have so much collateral damage.

And certainly the other countries in the region, countries in the world can cut off their funds. All of these things would have the effect of at least bringing toward a neutralization the bombers. So I think we are not at all helpless in things that we can do to take their popularity away. We want to reach a point where the people will turn in the terrorists. That may be a long way off, but it has to happen.

In any event, Mr. Ackerman is next.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to associate myself with the remarks of the Chairman and the Ranking Member and Ms. Ros-Lehtinen as well.

Mr. Lantos' questions, I thought, were very key in trying to understand and to run the commentary on actions and reactions. Neutral observers, I would think, watching what the U.S. says and what the U.S. does and what the U.S. has done in the same types of circumstances, would lead harsher critics to think of the word hypocrisy at times, if you have a policy of telling people to do as I say and don't do as I do. It is very difficult for the world to understand, and even for people like me, how we can take certain actions in response to terrorism and then to tell others that, when they do the same exact thing, that it is not helpful and it is a destructive process? And I think Mr. Lantos was right in raising that point. I know that we have to say certain things as we are doing certain other things, but I think it is important for the world to see that the words and the music kind of line up, and we are not doing that very well.

But as to the issue of the meeting at Sharm al-Shaykh and the press conference at Aqaba, I heard some things there that were very, very encouraging, first from the Israeli Prime Minister—a word that I have not heard for a while from Israeli officials—and that is the word dignity, in referring to how the Palestinians had a right to be treated. And I think that that is very important.

Abu Mazen said that he recognized Israel's right to exist and many other things that I thought were critical to this process. And the President put his finger on something that Ms. Ros-Lehtinen picked up upon that is absolutely essential, and that is, the President said in reference to Israel's existence as a Jewish state, Abu Mazen did not quite say that. He said he recognized Israel's right to exist. There have been some historically who have believed that it was the ultimate goal of Mr. Arafat in continuing to get what he would get in these processes by compromising and get as much as he could, and in the very end his real goal was to obliterate Israel as a Jewish state.

The Palestinians and Abu Mazen, if insisting only on the right of Israel to exist while at the same time demanding the right of all Palestinians to return as a simultaneous thing, is an indication to many that they are recognizing Israel's right to exist only because they know that later on the demographics, if all of the Palestinians would return, would create a majority of Palestinians. In a democratic Israel, Israel would no longer exist as a Jewish state, as you would have the State of Palestine living side by side peacefully with the Palestinian State of Israel.

Do we have a commitment from Abu Mazen and the Palestinian leadership, or have we not thought of that nuanced approach; that it is not just their insistence at this point that Israel has a right to exist, but has a right to exist as a Jewish democracy?

Mr. BURNS. I think what Prime Minister Abbas had to say was very clear in his acceptance of President Bush's two-state vision and, more important than his acceptance, his commitment to follow through with actions behind that.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Yeah. But the words, Ambassador, are very, very important. There is a difference when somebody gets sworn in and they say, I promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. What is the difference between the truth and the whole truth? Why do you have to promise both? And the answer is, if I believe in Israel's right to exist and have my fingers crossed in back of me, and then later on we are going to turn it into a Palestinian state and not allow it to exist as a Jewish state, that is the truth, because you haven't said the other. What the President said was important: Recognize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state. And I don't know that we have crossed that Rubicon yet.

Mr. BURNS. Well, I think, first, you are absolutely right. It is very important what the President said and what he and Secretary Powell have repeated in recent months, and that is a very firm American determination and commitment to the Jewish character of the State of Israel and to its security.

I think what Prime Minister Abbas had to say is important in Aqaba. I think it is also important to—

Mr. ACKERMAN. My question is, have we brought this up?

Mr. BURNS. The issue of right of return—

Mr. ACKERMAN. No. The issue of Israel's right to exist, four words, as a Jewish state. That is the issue here, no other issue.

Mr. BURNS. Right. I understand, Mr. Ackerman. No, it is a subject that we have discussed. I am confident—

Mr. ACKERMAN. We have discussed among ourselves, or we have discussed with Abu Mazen and the Palestinian leadership?

Mr. BURNS. I am not sure of a specific conversation about that, the phrase that you use. But what I am saying, Mr. Ackerman, is I have no doubt about the commitment of Prime Minister Abbas to an outcome which first takes very clearly into account the Jewish character of the State of Israel.

Second, I think the issue of the right of return is obviously an extremely complicated one, and we understand very clearly its importance to the Government and the people of Israel. It is something that in our view—and this is the logic that we laid out in the roadmap—that obviously has to be addressed and has to be agreed to by the parties. And that is something that is going to have to happen before you can realize that two-state vision.

Chairman HYDE. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. ACKERMAN. If I might have one additional 20 seconds, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman HYDE. Surely.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Otherwise, what we are talking about is an American and Israeli perspective that we will have two states living side by side, one being a state, you said, with a Jewish character. I am saying a Jewish state.

Mr. BURNS. Which is exactly what we have said.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I hope so. And the Israelis are saying that, and the Palestinians basically say, what is mine is mine, and what is yours is ours.

Mr. BURNS. What I am saying, Mr. Ackerman, is I have a great deal of confidence that when Prime Minister Abbas talks about his commitment to the President's two-state vision, he has a very realistic view of what that means. I believe he is committed to doing the hard things that are going to be required to make that possible.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I thank the Chairman. We would just like to hear him enunciate it.

Chairman HYDE. Mr. Rohrabacher.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First and foremost, let me congratulate my friends at the State Department, who I usually don't congratulate, as well as our President, who I congratulate quite often, for the tenacity and courage of this very bold initiative. The President had a tremendous uplift in his prestige due to the victory in Iraq and his courage and his bold strategy there. He is using that, he is putting it on the line, to try to bring peace to the Middle East. He doesn't have to do that, he knows how risky it is, but the President is willing to do that; and we in Congress need to back him up and back up the roadmap as much as we can, because this really is a bold move on the part of our President.

Second of all, let me suggest that Mr. Ackerman's line of questioning goes to the heart of something that is going to make this successful or not. Either the Palestinians are going to accept that Israel exists as a Jewish state or not. Unfortunately, for their part,

it is not going to be a nonreligious state; it is going to be something tied directly to those people who fought and struggled to build an Israel as they see it for these last 50 years. So that is an important definition of what Israel will be. And for peace to exist, that has got to be recognized by the Palestinians, and it has got to be specific. And no one can hedge on that.

The right of return goes to the heart of that issue, which is what you were trying to get at. And we have to make sure that we do not lose sight of the fundamental compromise that is necessary for the President's roadmap to succeed, and that is the Palestinians and their allies have got to give up the right of return and recognize Israel's right to exist, and the Israelis have got to give up the West Bank, including all of those settlements, and they can't hedge as well.

And let me note, until you hear right out of Prime Minister Abbas' mouth the right of return is no longer on the table, and until you quit hearing Prime Minister Sharon hedging, calling the settlements outposts, no. The settlements have got to go for peace's sake, and the Palestinians have got to accept the right of return is gone and that Israel will be accepted and be lived in peacefully.

That is the center part of the compromise; is it not?

Mr. BURNS. Sir, those are very critical issues, just as you said. The premise of the roadmap is that we have got to get started, and we have got to get started to address issues like security, the dignity of Palestinians creating a sense of hope so that you create an atmosphere in which those kind of questions can be successfully dealt with.

I think when you look at what was said publicly in Aqaba, particularly by Prime Minister Abbas and Prime Minister Sharon, it should give us all some sense of hope.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I agree. There have been major steps forward that we cannot lose sight of. As we go through these bumps in the road and sometimes huge craters in the road, let us not lose sight of the fact that we now have Yasser Arafat no longer the absolute controller of the PLO, and that is a huge step forward. And also, we have got Ariel Sharon talking about giving up settlements on the West Bank, and recognizing a Palestinian state. That is a huge step forward in both cases.

I would just hope that—first of all, how many people were killed? How many Palestinians lost their lives in this Israeli assassination attempt on the Hamas leader the other day?

Mr. BURNS. I would have to get the exact number for you, Congressman. I think it was five or six, but I am not sure.

[The information referred to follows:]

QUESTION SUBMITTED TO THE HONORABLE WILLIAM J. BURNS, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, BY THE HONORABLE DANA ROHRABACHER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, AND MR. BURNS' WRITTEN RESPONSE

Question:

How many Palestinians lost their lives in this Israeli assassination attempt on the Hamas leader the other day [June 10, 2003]?

Answer:

According to our best information, a total of three Palestinians were killed in the attack on Abdel Aziz Rantissi, a senior Hamas political figure. An individual de-

scribed as a Hamas bodyguard and a fifty-year-old female passerby were killed immediately, while an eight-year-old girl died of her injuries on 15 June. Twenty-eight other civilians were injured. This information is consistent with information from UNRWA and Israeli press reports.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Five or six. And so we lost eight Israelis today, noncombatants, as well as 40 wounded. There was Israeli effort to assassinate this Hamas leader, and that was predicated on, what, an attack on some Israeli soldiers on the West Bank? And this is—I know my friends hate this, this is a cycle of violence, and it has got to stop. There are noncombatant Palestinians, children, women and children, dead on the street, and there are dead Israeli women and children on the street. We cannot let those people whose hearts are filled with hate who are still trying to do these sort of things get in the way of our finding a peace that will put an end to that type of cycle.

I appreciate the President's tenacity and his courage to step forward on this issue, and we have got to stick together on it. So thank you very much.

Chairman HYDE. Mr. Berman.

Mr. BERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I will resist the temptation to probe my friend and colleague Mr. Rohrabacher's comment about all of the settlements and the different way in which the roadmap treats those issues.

President Mubarak in his comments said, among other things: We will use all the power of the law to prevent support reaching illegal organizations, including terrorist groups. Hamas is a terrorist group with a large organization in both the West Bank and particularly in Gaza. A reputable Palestinian has told me that continuing up through now, Hamas is receiving financial support from the Saudis, the Kuwaitis, and a number of other Gulf countries. We have made a major effort in this country to deal with financial support going to Hamas; that some of this financial support is in part based on the theological nature of Hamas's principles as compared with the more secular nature of the older line Palestinian organizations, and in part because of historical objections to Arafat in particular's role at the time of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

One question I have, and I will give you both of them before you answer, if that is all right, is what are we doing? Is this Palestinian's information correct, and what are we doing about our friends and allies like the Saudis' and the Kuwaitis' continued financial support for Hamas, which allows them to maintain this terrorist infrastructure that we are committed to seeing dismantled?

The second question is on the roadmap. For a variety of reasons, I think compelling reasons, the actual development and release of the roadmap was delayed far beyond the time it was drafted. It has certain dates in there, some of which are coming up fairly quickly. At the same time, it is defined as a performance-based roadmap. What is our position on the question of whether one goes from the first stage to the second stage before the conditions set forth in the first stage have been complied with by the parties? I would be curious to hear your response to both of those questions.

Mr. BURNS. Yes, sir. Mr. Berman, on the second question first, this is, as the title line of the roadmap makes clear, a performance-based effort. And so it is performance that is going to determine

moving from one phase to another. There are time targets indicated in the roadmap, but they are targets. They are designed to provide an incentive, a sense of hope, a sense of purpose. But it is only performance that is going to allow movement forward within phases and from one to the other.

Mr. BERMAN. Is that the understanding of the other parties to the quartet as well?

Mr. BURNS. Yes, sir.

On your first question, with regard to the commitments that were made in Sharm al-Shaykh and that President Mubarak talked about publicly, those were important obligations that the parties there entered into to cut off all forms of support for terrorist groups, and the President intends to hold those parties to those commitments. We have seen some progress with regard to cutting off the flow of official or public monies to those groups, and we have also seen an effort, for example, on the part of the Saudis in the last couple of weeks to set up a mechanism to regulate the flow of charitable contributions, which has been a huge problem in the past in terms of private contributions getting into the wrong hands. It is encouraging that the Saudis are now trying to put in place a mechanism to regulate that flow to make sure that it doesn't get in the hands of terrorist groups.

Setting it up and applying it and getting results are, of course, two different things, and we are going to work very hard with all the parties with whom the President met at Sharm al-Shaykh to make that commitment a reality.

Mr. BERMAN. What about the Kuwaitis? Is this information I received from this Palestinian accurate, though, basically about the Saudi and Kuwaiti support for—

Mr. BURNS. Certainly in the past there have been private monies that have gotten into the wrong hands. That is absolutely the case. And we will work—

Mr. BERMAN. I am told it is continuing. It continues.

Mr. BURNS. As I said, I think there has been some progress not just in what was said in Sharm al-Shaykh, but in actual performance. We are going to have to keep pushing to see those commitments upheld, and that includes not only the parties that actually physically were present at Sharm al-Shaykh, but also others. And that includes the Kuwaitis and other states in the region, too.

And this gets back to one of the points that you and your colleagues have made, that we are not distinguishing between terrorist groups here. A terrorist is a terrorist. And we need, as part of the broader war on terrorism, to cut off all sources of support to terrorist groups, financial and otherwise, and that is what the President is determined to do.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. [Presiding.] Thank you, Mr. Berman.

Mr. Chabot.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a couple observations and a question.

First of all, apparently there has been an additional incident that has occurred. The Israelis have targeted another Hamas militant in an attempt to deal with the situation that they are facing. I think the use of the term we have heard this morning, this cycle of violence, is really not an appropriate term. I don't think it is rep-

representative of what has actually happened. The leaders on both sides indicate that both sides were going to reject violence, that we were going to try to start anew and a fresh start to resolve what many think is an unsolvable problem. But then we saw the terrorist organizations attack Israel and kill soldiers, unprovoked. I think Israel is justified to strike back if, as Mr. Lantos said, Abu Mazen is either unable or unwilling to maintain control and deal with the terrorist elements within his area. And he has shown no inclination at this point to do that.

But I also give the President great credit for attempting, doing the best he can to deal with this very volatile situation that we are faced with. However, I disagree with the Administration's criticism directed at Israel yesterday. I think that the criticism is misdirected. The criticism really should be toward those who started it, and it was not Israel that started this. But this is a problem that we have—we and many others have tried to deal with for a long time, and a very, very difficult situation.

I have just one question about the French and their apparent continued dealings with Yasser Arafat, and some of our so-called allies and perhaps how they are undermining Abu Mazen and undermining the whole process if they are going to continue to go to Yasser Arafat. Mr. Ambassador, if you could comment on that and what role that might play in our ability to bring peace to that very troubled region of the world.

Mr. BURNS. I think it is absolutely essential to do everything not only the United States can, but everybody else who wants to move in the direction of a two-state vision to empower the new Palestinian Prime Minister and his cabinet to try and help them make a reality of the vision that Prime Minister Abbas started in Aqaba. It is very important to ensure that financial support, for example, to the Palestinian leadership goes through the Minister of Finance, Mr. Fayyad. It is very important to do just what the Arab States did in Sharm al-Shaykh, those who were gathered there and expressed their strong public support for the direction Prime Minister Abbas wants to move the Palestinian people. Again, that is deeply in the self-interest of Palestinians in the interest of establishing the state that they seek.

One thing the President has emphasized over and over again in public as well as in private is the importance for the Palestinians themselves of creating institutions that go beyond any one individual, because that is going to be the most solid basis on which to build a state, a state that is going to live in peace and security and dignity with Israel.

And so we have put, as the President has said, our bet on a transformed leadership for Palestinians. We are doing everything that we can not only to hold Prime Minister Abbas to his obligations, and that is going to require some very tough actions on his part and some risk-taking, but also to do everything we can to support that effort to show Palestinians real tangible results on the ground, results they can see and feel that can be produced if you move in a direction that is peaceful, that works against terror and violence, and that is the only pathway through which you are going to achieve that state.

And so that is very much the direction the President has pursued quite clearly for the last year since his June 24th speech. We are urging in the strongest terms that everyone be committed to that same vision, to move in that same direction.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

And, Madam Chair, since I probably only have a whisper left of my time, I will yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Ms. Watson is recognized.

Ms. WATSON. It is very difficult to sort out the events based on the roadmap. I am compelled by almost every statement that has been made in the Committee. What is the White House's true belief as to the efficacy and the success of the roadmap? The ink wasn't even dried on the agreement when we saw an attack. It is retaliation and attack, retaliation and attack. Is there a counterstrategy to see success? What is it? It is very, very difficult, because just the announcement that there was a suicide bombing aboard a bus is shattering. Not to use a pun, but it really is shattering to hopes. The Israeli attack is shattering. So, what does the White House truly believe in terms of its roadmap?

Mr. BURNS. I think the President believes very firmly just exactly what he said in Sharm al-Shaykh and Aqaba, that with a real commitment on the part of the parties in the region, all of the them, Palestinians, Israelis, Arab States, as well as the United States, that it is possible to move ahead in the direction of the two-state vision he laid out, recognizing full well that this is not going to be easy, that there are a number of enemies in the path of this process, and that there are huge obstacles. And that should not surprise anyone.

This is a very sad thing to say in light of the horrible loss of innocent life on both sides, and the events of the last few days have reminded us of that, but they should also remind us that none of us can afford, and particularly Israelis and Palestinians can't afford, to allow extremist minority groups like Hamas to have a veto over any possibility of moving ahead. They need to be fought, and they need to be fought decisively. But at the same time we have to help create a sense of hope and create a sense of possibility that everyday life is going to begin to improve for Palestinians, that the security concerns of Israeli citizens are going to be addressed, that responsible Palestinians and Israelis can begin to work again together in their mutual self-interest, and to take some of the very positive words that were uttered in Sharm al-Shaykh and Aqaba and to begin to translate them into reality.

And the roadmap is a mechanism for beginning to do that. It is not a panacea, it is not a magic cure for everything. It is going to require some very hard work on the part of Israelis and Palestinians and Americans and others. And that is what the President is determined to do—to roll up our sleeves and do everything that we can to help that process.

Progress is not going to be measured in terms of grand dramatic breakthroughs. It is going to be measured, I think, step by step; improvement in people's lives, improvement in the security situation, rebuilding of responsible Palestinian security services, and ul-

timately, as I said, rekindling a sense of hope for people. But it will not be easy, ma'am; you are exactly right.

Ms. WATSON. Congressman Rohrabacher said something that I think we have to look at. We are good friends, but we hardly agree. But he did say something that I find compelling. On both sides there needs to be movement. The expansion of settlements goes in the wrong direction for peace. The establishment of a homeland for both groups, to me, is an absolute essential if we are going to realize the hopes and dreams of the roadmap. I don't even know if the United States of America can fashion this. It has got to be worked out politically on both sides. That is where their struggle is. We can suggest, we can bring them together, but as soon as we do that, they go and do what they do often.

I am just wondering how extensive our role can truly be. I think we can support the two sides. They are going to have to sit down. I think the Israelis deserve an Israeli Jewish state. Semantics play a great role here. And I think the Palestinians deserve a place where they can live as well. But as long as they feel that they need to recapture the lands that Israel now occupies, we are going to see this continue.

So, I don't have the answer, and I don't think we as an Administration have the answer. We have to continue to look at it, to measure performance, and to really encourage both sides to settle.

Mr. BURNS. Yes, ma'am. I agree absolutely with you. I mean, both sides are going to have to come to that conclusion.

Ms. WATSON. Everybody has got to give.

Mr. BURNS. There has been enough loss of innocent lives on both sides. This is a terrible dead-end for both peoples, and there has to be a different direction. The United States can play a critical leadership role in highlighting that for people, and that is what President Bush has done quite admirably in Sharm al-Shaykh and in Aqaba. We can't substitute in the end for the courage and the conviction of leaders on both sides. I think what was said by both Prime Ministers, Prime Minister Abbas and Prime Minister Sharon, in Aqaba was encouraging in that respect. Some important things were said there. They are going to have to be followed up by actions.

There is a lot we can do to help, but it is ultimately going to be the two peoples themselves who decide they have to move in a different direction.

Ms. WATSON. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Mr. Pitts.

Mr. PITTS. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Mr. Ambassador, if a Palestinian state is created, and there are two states, Israel will need secure borders to exist. My question has to do with the Administration's position. Is the Administration going to pressure Israel to give back the West Bank, or part of the West Bank, or part of Jerusalem? Or is that going to be negotiated by the parties? What is the position of the Administration on that?

Mr. BURNS. That only through direct negotiations between the parties that those kind of very difficult permanent status issues are going to be resolved. So the essence, as the roadmap makes clear, sir, and as President Bush's June 24th speech made clear, and

what remains our policy, is that direct negotiations between the two parties are needed to sort out those extremely difficult questions.

Mr. PITTS. So as to the area of the Palestinian state that would be created, the United States Administration has not taken a position on where that would actually be, where those boundaries would be?

Mr. BURNS. Well, the United States over the years has consistently made clear our support for U.N. Security Council resolutions, in particular 242 and 338. President Bush has talked about the importance of creating a viable Palestinian state, and, even more importantly, so did Prime Minister Sharon in what I thought was his very significant public statement in Aqaba where he talked about the importance of territorial contiguity for a viable Palestinian state. And that was an important statement.

So I think the details, and they are enormously thorny, are going to have to be sorted out in direct negotiations. There is a lot the United States and others can do to support that process, but it is only through direct negotiations between the two parties that those kind of issues, as well as other permanent status issues, are going to be resolved. And, again, the premise of the roadmap is that you want to begin to take some steps now that could create an atmosphere in which those issues can be resolved in a fair and sensible fashion.

Mr. PITTS. Now, one of the aspects of the roadmap is to call for the Palestinians to hold free and open elections, with independent election monitors. And if that occurred and the Palestinian people were to reelect Arafat in a truly free and internationally supervised election, how would the U.S. address that problem?

Mr. BURNS. Well, I think that is just a hypothetical issue, and we will have to see what happens when the time comes. I think it is going to be important at the appropriate point for Palestinians to have free and fair elections. They have proven in the past that they are entirely capable of building the kind of strong political institutions that are the best foundation for statehood. I have a great deal of confidence that they can move in that direction over time, and we will just have to see how that process plays out.

The President's focus is going to be very much on creating institutions that are far more important than individuals or the particular participants in those institutions.

Mr. PITTS. Then, will it include expanding the role of the Palestinian Legislative Council? Or, is the Administration taking steps now to prevent Arafat from consolidated power within the Palestinian Authority?

Mr. BURNS. We have done a number of things, many of which I have spoken to earlier, sir, to help strengthen institutions in the Palestinian Authority; the new post of Prime Minister, the new ministers in Prime Minister Abbas' cabinet, as well as the Palestinian Legislative Council, which has played a very interesting and important role in the last few months in pushing for just the sort of reforms you were talking about. The debate in the Palestinian Legislative Council has been a lively one, and that is something that we want to encourage and strengthen over time.

Mr. PITTS. One more question, and I don't have a lot of time left, but about the education system: Are steps being undertaken to encourage change in the Palestinian education system to orient it more toward a democracy-based system, promoting values that would accommodate tolerance and understanding as opposed to violence and struggle?

Mr. BURNS. Yes, sir. And one of the things that Prime Minister Abbas has spoken to is the support that he is determined to give to his Minister of Education to begin to move in that direction, everything from tolerance materials, textbooks, and the tone of debate and of education itself. All of those things are very important as we try and create an atmosphere in which you can realize a two-state vision. He understands that, I believe, and I think he wants to work with his ministers to try and achieve that.

Mr. PITTS. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Mr. Schiff.

Mr. SCHIFF. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Ambassador, I wanted to turn to one of the points that was made earlier, and that is the issue of the right of return.

Mr. BURNS. Yes, sir.

Mr. SCHIFF. Because I think there is a certain validity to the argument that while Israel has now accepted the right of the Palestinian state to exist, that without an unequivocal acceptance of the right of Israel to exist, there is not an equivalency that makes this process likely to succeed. Israel understands that if the Palestinians adhere to an unrestricted right of return, they are basically not recognizing the state of Israel, and I think this has engendered a lot of the skepticism within Israel about how committed the Palestinians are to a two-state solution.

One of the flaws, I think, in the Oslo process was that the Palestinian leadership never prepared the Palestinian people for the sacrifices they would need to make ultimately. The Israeli Government did a much better job preparing its population for the bitter pill it would have to swallow. But the same was not done, either in Palestinian schools or in the Palestinian population in general.

And when you say, as you did earlier, that you understand Mr. Abbas' statements at Aqaba to indicate that when he talks about a safe and sovereign Israel, you have confidence in that he understands what we mean by that, and he means the same thing. Nonetheless, if he is unwilling to speak directly to the issue of the right of return, he will not be preparing the Palestinian people for something they will have to confront if this roadmap is going to stay on track within the next couple of years. And I don't think we necessarily do a service to Mr. Abbas or the process by not calling for a recognition that the unrestricted right of return to Israel in contrast to a Palestinian state is really a nonstarter. The roadmap doesn't lead there. And I wanted to ask you about that.

What actions are Mr. Abbas taking to prepare the Palestinian people for the sacrifices they will have to make? What statements has he made about the right of return? What concrete actions has he taken beyond the words he spoke at Aqaba to show that he intends to follow—indeed follow—word with deed?

Mr. BURNS. Yes, sir. First, Mr. Schiff, I would say that I think the statement that Prime Minister Abbas made in Aqaba was a very clear indication of his determination to prepare people for that kind of future, and I think that was significant.

Second, I think he has begun to follow through in a number of specific ways, putting strong people in key ministries, whether it is in the Ministry of Finance, the ministry responsible for security affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education, or a range of other areas, and then supporting them as they try and move in the directions that you described; taking on, for example, the issue of incitement, incitement to hatred and violence and media excesses, which is a very difficult but extremely important problem to address. I think he recognizes all of those issues and is determined to move in that direction, and I think you will see progress along those lines.

Again, on the right of return, it is obviously an enormously difficult issue, a permanent status issue, in our view, that is going to have to be resolved between the parties. And one of the things that was most interesting about the Beirut summit declaration or initiative of more than a year ago now was the reference to the importance acknowledged by Arab States of an agreed solution to the problem of refugees. And clearly you are not going to be able to establish a Palestinian state unless those kind of issues are resolved in a way that is agreed by the two parties.

Mr. SCHIFF. Ambassador, before I run out of time, let me just follow up very quickly. Do you anticipate, or is there any reason to expect that organizations like Hamas, Islamic Jihad, al-Aksa would ever give up the right of return? And if they won't give up the right of return, isn't the Palestinian Civil War that Mahmoud Abbas is trying to avoid inevitable? If his government acknowledges the unrestricted right of return as a nonstarter, ultimately isn't there going to be a fight between Abbas and these terrorist organizations?

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Secretary, we have an hour's worth of votes, unfortunately. I know that you need to leave.

I would like to, if I may, Mr. Schiff, quickly recognize the remaining Members we have so they can ask their questions in a whisper of a manner; and we would welcome your comments in writing. And that will be in this order: Mr. Pence, Mr. Wexler, Mr. Janklow, Mr. Faleomavaega, Mr. Smith of New Jersey, Mr. Bell, and Mr. Crowley. If we could, in the little time we have. Thank you. And Mr. Tancredo. I am sorry, I did not see you.

Mr. PENCE. Thank you, Madam Chairman. My question is very simple for the Secretary. Mr. Lantos used the word *sine qua non*, which is Latin for without which not. The end of terrorism should be understood to be the *sine qua non* of establishing a Palestinian state. My very direct question is, has the President, has the United States of America, made it crystal clear to Prime Minister Abbas that if the terrorism, if the killing of Israeli civilians and soldiers doesn't end, that there will be no Palestinian state?

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Mr. Wexler.

Mr. BURNS. Yes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. If you can answer your question.

Mr. WEXLER. Are we going to allow the responses? How are we doing this?

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. He is going to have to give them to us in writing. He has got another appointment, and we have an hour of votes.

Mr. WEXLER. Okay. I am willing to miss the first vote and wait. So—

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Janklow.

Mr. JANKLOW. Madam Chairwoman, I will go ahead and pass.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Mr. Faleomavaega.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. A whisper question here. Thank you, Madam Chairman. Quick questions for Secretary Burns.

Has the President received full commitment and endorsement from the Arab nations for Israel's right to exist as a sovereign nation? I understand some nations still continue to boycott and not even recognize Israel. The President has made a sincere effort to recognize a Palestinian state. Have we also received full endorsement from the Israeli Government through Prime Minister Sharon to give recognition for the Palestinians to establish a sovereign state as well? Those are my quick questions.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Mr. Tancredo.

Mr. TANCREDO. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

First of all, if you could, what role do you envision for the United Nations apart from any of its members? Would Kofi Annan have to consult with Libya about his actions? And what role do you see for the various European institutions to play in the peace process? Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Ms. Lee, I apologize for bumping you. I sincerely apologize.

Ms. LEE. Thank you. That is okay.

I just want to thank you, Ambassador Burns. And let me just say, as one who has been very supportive for a strong and credible role for the United States, to insist that the violence end, that there be a two-state solution, and that we forge ahead with the peace process. I wrote to the President and indicated my support for the roadmap and for the need for his very consistent role in moving this forward. Terrorism and violence will not bring peace and security for Israel, nor statehood and peace for the Palestinian people.

So let me just ask you, with regard to the Palestinian security forces, they clearly need to be rebuilt in order for Prime Minister Abbas to assert internal control and quell the violence. I wanted to find out what the United States' role is in terms of helping to insist that these controls are put into place? And I just want to thank the Chair for the opportunity to talk with you. The loss of innocent lives on both sides requires the United States to stay engaged to bring both sides together. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Ms. Lee.

Mr. Smith of New Jersey.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Thank you very much.

Ambassador Burns, thank you for the great job that you and the President are doing. I think we are all greatly encouraged. But I had a number of questions, but I will narrow it to one.

Arafat seems to care only about Arafat, and at this point the great hope is that he will get out of the way and allow reform to go forward. What role do you see, what enhanced role, for Arab leaders to put additional pressure and encouragement to him to step aside and to allow this roadmap to hopefully bear significant fruit? Obviously, they were very helpful in the most recent meeting, but it seems to me there needs to be much more hands-on going forward so that there is no diminution of that support for the roadmap process.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Mr. Bell.

Mr. BELL. Thank you, Madam Chair.

And thank you, Ambassador.

What I am concerned about is Arafat's ability to play a spoiler role as optimism continues to grow around the roadmap process. His actions suggest he is more interested in clinging to power than he is in promoting peace. And it seems also clear that he will never be content with taking a back-seat role to Abu Mazen. So, with that in mind, what steps are being taken to strengthen Abu Mazen's position vis-a-vis Yasser Arafat's position? What is the level of commitment from Arab leaders to ensure that Arafat not become an obstacle to peace? And what, if anything, has been promised by those leaders?

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Bell.

Mr. Crowley.

Mr. CROWLEY. I thank my colleague from Florida and as well my colleague from Texas for asking that question. I am also interested in the answer to that: What are we doing to bolster Abu Mazen and diminish the role of Yasser Arafat in the region?

But also the question I want to get to right away: What are we doing about the people? What are we doing about the people who exist on both sides of this conflict? What is the U.S. doing to build constituencies for peace in the region, and how is that encompassed? Is it encompassed in the roadmap, and how is it encompassed in the roadmap given the angst that we are seeing imposed by the Arab world? I think that is crucial to have that in terms of any final settlement within the region. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

And as I recognize Mr. Wexler, I would like to say that, in addition, Members are welcome to submit questions in writing, and we will forward them to Secretary Burns, who has a lot of homework in front of him for that trip to Jordan. You have a long flight to answer the questions.

Mr. Wexler.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you, Ambassador Burns, very much for at least sticking around a little bit more.

First, it has been said before, but personally I think it can't be said enough in terms of acknowledging your personal Herculean effort and the efforts that you have engaged in in the last several years, but particularly in the last 2 weeks. I think the American

people are indebted to you and to those along with you who have engaged in this effort.

I would like to, if I could, follow Mr. Chabot's remarks with respect to the President's comments of yesterday, particularly to the misdirection of the President's comments. It seems to me that, from an American perspective, there can be no legitimate discussion as to whether or not the Israeli action of yesterday with respect to the Hamas leader is justified. From an American perspective, it is 100 percent justified, and anything other than that emanating from the White House or the State Department to me seems to be entirely inconsistent with American policy. It would seem to me the only discussion that can be had from an American perspective is not whether the Israeli action is justified. It is simply whether the Israeli action enhances or detracts from Israel's security, and whether it enhances and detracts from the process that has been undergone. But justification should never be an American question.

In that light, it is my understanding that the agreement that you so ably helped facilitate was specific in saying that Israel would not engage in unilateral military action unless there was a ticking time bomb, and if there was a ticking time bomb, then it was understood by the parties that Israel remains obligated and has the authority to act. By the President's speaking yesterday, and his criticism of Israeli action, I assumed that the President has concluded that the Hamas leader who was targeted was not a ticking time bomb.

On the other hand, my understanding is the Israelis have offered, or maybe have, in fact, provided, intelligence to us establishing the fact that the Hamas leader who was targeted was not only a ticking time bomb, but a ticking time bomb factory.

So, it seems to me that in order to be consistent with our own agreement, we either have had to have concluded that that Hamas leader was not a ticking time bomb, or that we, by virtue of the President's statement, are running contrary to our own policy.

The other element of the facade or the charade that I personally don't fully understand is the aspect of empowering Prime Minister Abbas. On the one hand, we talk about doing everything we are capable of doing to empower Prime Minister Abbas. The President has talked about the CIA being on the ground. The President has talked and you talked today about Ambassador Wolf and the half a dozen, eight, nine people that will be a part of this operation. But it seems to me that unless we deal with the ultimate question, which we have not ultimately dealt with yet, and that is, how are we going to empower Prime Minister Abbas militarily, everything else becomes irrelevant. So long as we stick with our policy of not providing assistance to the Palestinian Authority, how is it that we envision that Prime Minister Abbas will ever have the ability to deal with Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the like? Either we are going to provide it, the Israelis are going to provide it, or the Egyptians are going to provide it, but it seems so far no one is providing it. So who are we kidding? How can Prime Minister Abbas in any reasonable expectation have the capability to deliver on what we all hope is his genuine mission?

The third aspect of my hope on which you might be able to respond is Syria. I, along with Congressman Issa, were in Syria last week. I would be very curious to understand how it is we are judg-

ing and/or gauging the Syrian response to Secretary Powell's visit 2 or 3 weeks ago with President Assad? Is Syria complying? Is Syria responding? Is Syria ignoring?

Congressman Issa and I had a very specific discussion with President Assad in terms of what I believe has been Syrian non-compliance with American requests. I would be very curious to see officially or hear officially what is our position with respect to the reaction of Syria to the Secretary's request.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you. And we will be having a separate hearing on Syria.

Mr. Wexler's time is up, and I am afraid that we do have to go vote, and I am going to gavel this hearing closed. If you could please give your answer to Mr. Wexler in private, that would be wonderful.

Mr. Secretary, we look forward to your responses in writing.

Thank you. This Committee is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:31 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, A
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF FLORIDA

As we approach the anniversary of President Bush's seminal address on peace in the Middle East, we are reminded that we stand at the precipice of a momentous opportunity—one unlike any other in the recent past.

The Aqaba summit encapsulated this immense potential to rebuild trust, re-start direct negotiations, and promote progress toward a lasting, mutually beneficial and mutually acceptable solution.

We have learned the lessons of history and, thus, the current path will not be the Oslo process. *We will not allow terrorists* and those who empower and protect them obstruct the road to peace.

This refers specifically to Yasser Arafat.

Leaders who seek peace and truly care about their people make the necessary sacrifices, including risking their own political and professional future for the sake of peace. Conversely, *those who only care about personal power are called tyrants.*

Arafat's actions, including his recent maneuvers to protect his loyalists by issuing a presidential decree removing the regional governors from the authority of the Interior Ministry to his own office, clearly demonstrate that he falls into the latter category.

By resorting to violence and terrorism to achieve political objectives, Arafat has brought severe hardship to his own people and a halt to efforts to achieve a lasting peace.

Arafat must be removed from the equation—must be marginalized—if Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas or Abu Mazen; Security Minister, Mohammed Dahlan; and the new Palestinian cabinet are to have any hope of negotiating a mutually acceptable solution with the Israelis.

The challenges facing Abu Mazen are formidable enough, without having to face the continued interference and meddling of individuals, such as Arafat, who have squandered countless opportunities to make peace.

As President Bush has repeatedly articulated: "Peace requires a new and different Palestinian leadership, so that a Palestinian state can be born . . . A Palestinian state will never be created by terror—it will be built through reform. And reform must be more than cosmetic change . . ."

The Congress wishes to support and empower the new Palestinian leadership—a policy articulated in the Foreign Relations Authorization Bill recently passed by the full International Relations Committee.

In this provision, we underscore "United States willingness to provide substantial economic and humanitarian assistance, and to support large-scale multilateral assistance, after the Palestinians have achieved the reforms outlined by President Bush and have achieved peace with the State of Israel."

Today's session seeks to address some of the specific reforms and requirements. Primordial among these is the renunciation of terror and a demonstrable, verifiable effort by the Palestinian leadership to combat such terrorism.

An end to terror must be unconditional and complete. There cannot be a quid pro quo with regard to the cessation of terrorist attacks.

Only the *full implementation*—not just presentation, but *implementation*—of a comprehensive anti-terrorism plan aimed at destroying these organizations will serve as a catalyst for Congressional support for any roadmap to peace.

Palestinians must commit to ending terrorism and arresting and *holding* the terrorists—not release them soon afterward. The terrorists' weapons must also be confiscated. Half measures will not work.

Progression must be performance-based and the commitment must be concrete.

As I said at the onset, we are not operating within the same context. Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom underscored our commitment to eradicating terrorism as a global threat to security, stability, and peace.

The Middle East Partnership Initiative, combined with our efforts to create a Middle East Free Trade Area, clearly demonstrate our focus on *freedom and prosperity* for all the region.

We have taken the initiative. The choice now is that of the individual Arab governments, just as *the onus is now on the Palestinian leadership*.

We are gratified by the statements of the Palestinian Prime Minister and noted these in the Foreign Relations Authorization Bill.

In the bill, we highlighted that, in his remarks prior to the vote of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Mr. Abbas declared: "We denounce terrorism by any party and in all its forms both because of our religious and moral traditions and because we are convinced that such methods do not lend support to a just cause like ours but rather destroy it."

At the Aqaba summit, Abu Mazen reiterated his renunciation of terrorism and acknowledged that terrorism is "a dangerous obstacle to the achievement of an independent sovereign state" the Palestinians seek.

However, just two weeks prior, on May 21st, the Prime Minister was quoted as saying in an interview with Egypt's semi-official weekly that: "Arafat is . . . the man to whom we refer . . . We do not do anything without his approval . . . We will not allow any serious differences between Arafat and me."

These remarks by the Palestinian Prime Minister, combined with a policy of negotiation with terrorist groups such as Hamas, which refuses to put down its weapons, raises grave concerns for us.

It also leads to questions about *implementation and verification*; the monitoring mechanism; security plan; and *the role of U.S. intelligence agencies*.

At last week's summit in Aqaba, Jordan, President Bush stated that the U.S. would provide training and support to a new Palestinian security apparatus.

We hope to delve into specific areas, such as efforts undertaken to ensure that the new Palestinian security system will have clear lines of authority and accountability, and chain of command issues.

What type of assistance is the U.S. providing? Are we involved in reported efforts by Palestinian Security Minister Dahlan to buy illegal weapons carried by militants linked to the Fatah movement? Are these reports referring to weapons buy back programs correct?

Who are the recipients of our assistance or participants in any training program? What criteria is being used to ensure that those with terrorist ties are not part of the new security apparatus?

Is the manipulation of UNRWA facilities for terrorist purposes being addressed within the security discussions and, if so, how?

In authorizing legislation, my colleagues and I noted that "It is the Sense of the Congress that the U.S. Administration should work vigorously toward the goal of *two states* living side-by-side in peace within *secure* and internationally-recognized boundaries *free from threats or acts of force*."

Many of us view such a solution as calling for a *Jewish State* of Israel, existing next to a *democratic* Palestinian State, devoid of terrorism—a view echoed by the President last week, in his remarks following the summit meeting.

This segues into discussions about refugees and the "right of return"; outposts and settlements; the status of Jerusalem; and the process by which boundaries will be determined.

While there are divergent views in the Congress on these specific items, a majority of my colleagues and I firmly believe that the Roadmap must serve as a vehicle for the implementation of the principles clearly set forth in the President's June 24th address—principles that the Israeli Prime Minister accepted before the publication of *any* Roadmap and that Palestinian Prime Minister noted, with enthusiasm, in his remarks at last week's summit in Jordan.

This hearing also seeks to address the role of the new U.S. envoy and coordinating team; what role, if any, will the other Members of the Quartet play in this effort; and the role of such Arab leaders as King Abdullah of Jordan.

I would like to thank King Abdullah for his assistance. He, as his father before him, has proven to be a man committed to peace. We hope that Jordan's example will serve to motivate others into following a similar path.

Ultimately, our hope is that the dream of peace and security will become a reality.

Today's hearing will be the first of many, as we move along the path toward fulfillment of this goal.

We welcome Assistant Secretary of State Burns from his participation in the Aqaba summit and look forward to his testimony.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DONALD M. PAYNE, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY

Good morning. We are here today to discuss "The Middle East Peace Process at a Crossroads." Indeed, with yesterday's attacks in Gaza, and the killings of last Sunday, the peace process is very much in jeopardy.

Although President Bush met just last week with Prime Ministers Abbas and Sharon in Jordan, the notion of a "newly invigorated peace process" remains elusive as the cycle of violence continues. Rather than casting blame, we must focus on finding common ground.

Peace in the region, not just for Israel and Palestine, can only stem from mutual trust and confidence. I believe that with good will, patience, and tolerance, we can play constructive roles in helping to build this trust and confidence.

As I approach this complex situation, I pause to reflect on what the countries of the Middle East seek. I posit that they have the following priorities:

—*Security*—notably an end to terrorism as well as to attacks by either the police or the military;

—*Statehood*—for both Israel and Palestine, self-governing territories with respected borders; and

—*Substantive participation*—not by a limited number of individuals, but an ongoing dialogue process that includes a broad spectrum of interests and groups.

Aside from these objectives, I would also like to offer for consideration one concept to "incentivize" the peace process.

Joint Economic Incentive Projects may provide opportunities for Palestinian and Israel communities to work together for mutual gain. Such projects could include:

—The establishment of a *joint water resource control authority* for the Jordan River;

—The foundation of *artistic cooperatives* and *joint vocational training facilities* to reduce the inherent hatred and distrust that have been inculcated over generations;

—The construction of *highway and rail projects linking Gaza and the West Bank* to facilitate the secure and monitored movement of civilians and commercial goods;

—The provision of IMF and World Bank funding for *basic public infrastructure* in Gaza and the West Bank; and

—The creation of *tax-free enterprise zones* along border areas that feature a demilitarized setting for factories and other investment projects that would provide training and employment opportunities for both Israelis and Palestinians.

These could involve assembly or manufacturing facilities and/or agricultural processing plants. Funding for these projects could be conditioned upon the establishment and the maintenance of peace. Under these circumstances, violations could result in an immediate loss of project funding. Nonetheless, projects such as these could catalyze the peace process by providing strong economic incentives for both Israelis and Palestinians to participate. And through joint participation, cooperation might extend to other areas as trust and confidence develop.

Therefore, I strongly recommend that we consider a program element involving economic cooperation, in order to get both sides in this conflict to work together constructively. I look forward to today's testimony and the opportunity to discuss meaningful ways in which we can work together to advance the Middle East peace process.

Thank you.

VIOLENCE SINCE JUNE 4 PEACE SUMMIT

10 June: Israel launches two helicopter attacks in Gaza—at least five Palestinians killed; Hamas leader Abdel-Aziz Rantissi injured.

9 June: Two Palestinian militants killed trying to infiltrate Jewish settlement in Gaza.

8 June: Palestinian militants attack army base in Gaza—four soldiers, three militants killed; two militants shot dead after killing soldier in Hebron; militant killed after attacking troops in Gaza.

7 June: Palestinian militant killed after firing on Israeli troops in Gaza.

5 June: Two Palestinian militants killed in shoot-out with Israeli police in northern West Bank.

QUESTIONS:

1. Does the Administration foresee any role for international peacekeeping forces in the peace process?
2. What roles can the other members of the "Quartet" play? (U.S., UN, EU, Russia)
3. How can the dismantling of terrorist groups be conclusively demonstrated?
4. What provisions will be made in monitoring benchmarks to address human rights violations, such as attacks against civilians, house demolitions, collective punishments, and arbitrary detentions?
5. What steps will the Administration take to ensure that monitoring teams have expertise in evaluating the protection of human rights and in conflict resolution?

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JOSEPH R. PITTS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA

Chairman Hyde, I would like to thank you for convening this hearing today on an issue of such great national, and indeed, world importance.

With the end of Saddam Hussein's brutal regime in Iraq and the release of the "Road Map to Peace," we may have the best opportunity in a generation to secure a true and lasting peace between the Israelis and Palestinians.

The obstacles to such a peace settlement, however, are great and will take decades, or even longer, to overcome. There is no quick solution to this problem.

I am encouraged that the Palestinian Authority has a new Prime Minister, Mahmud Abbas, but am concerned that Yasser Arafat has kept control over security forces and foreign policy and has not endorsed a permanent end to the violence.

Prime Minister Abbas has accepted the road map, but rejected preconditions for implementing it, including Israel's demand that the Palestinians first abandon the right of refugees to return to Israel.

On May 25 of this year, the Israeli Cabinet approved the road map, but with fourteen reservations.

Further, the two sides have fundamentally different understandings of the road map—while the Palestinians view it as a simultaneous process, with actions required by both sides at the same time, the Israelis maintain that it is a sequential process beginning with the Palestinians' cessation of violence.

Many issues have yet to be discussed and resolved. For example, what guidance is the Administration giving to both sides regarding proposed solutions to the issue of refugees and the "right of return"; contiguity of a Palestinian state; outposts and settlements; the status of Jerusalem; and the process by which boundaries will be determined?

Additionally, the three major terrorist organizations, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, have joined together in an attempt to derail the peace process. And, less than a week after President Bush met with the leaders in Jordan, these groups have already attacked an army outpost in Gaza, and Israel has retaliated with two strikes against Palestinian targets.

How committed is the Palestinian Authority to not only *condemning* the ongoing violence, but *implementing* a comprehensive anti-terrorism plan aimed at dismantling groups dedicated to the destruction of Israel and the disruption of the peace plan?

Despite the violence, however, I firmly believe that the vast majority of Israelis and Palestinians desire peace and freedom, but have lost hope that a peace settlement could be reached.

That is why it is imperative that the U.S. remains committed to working with both sides to negotiate a lasting agreement that will restore stability to the region, ensure respect for human rights, and bring greater hope to Israelis and Palestinians alike.

I look forward to the testimony of Assistant Secretary Burns as he discusses the answers to these and other important questions. Thank you.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE NICK SMITH, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MICHIGAN

Mr. Chairman, as we meet here today, it is to study an issue that unfortunately, has demanded our attention for nearly 50 years. We meet with a renewed hope that this will be the time when the hopes of the world, and a huge majority of people in the region, will result in a lasting peace for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

As we sit here today, the peace process in the Middle East moves delicately forward while the proponents of peace and the forces of hate battle for control of the

Middle East's future. We have seen the positive developments of Prime Minister Abbas' condemnation of Hamas and voicing a commitment to peace. We have seen Prime Minister Sharon dismantle settler outposts constructed in disputed lands as promised. But we have also seen continued attacks of terrorist organizations and retaliations by Israeli forces. The fate of the peace process hangs in the balance, though the prospects for success are possibly greater than ever before.

For the first time in history, we have witnessed an Israeli Prime Minister and government formally recognize the right of the Palestinians to statehood. We have seen new representation of the Palestinian people in Prime Minister Mahmud Abbas condemn violence and commit to peace. We have seen Arab countries unite to signal their commitment to ending terrorism and working towards a Middle East free from violence. We have returned to a point of hope that seemed lost just 3 years ago.

But still, talks between Israel and Palestine are set against a backdrop of decades of violence and conflict. It will not be easy to bridge the gap of mistrust to find a solution beneficial to each.

In the wings, the leaders of the Arab World voice support for the process, but they must still explicitly reject Yassar Arafat's history of obstructionism and duplicity to bolster Prime Minister Abbas' role. Similarly, some of our European friends voice support for the idea of peace in the Middle East, but quibble over details of the Road Map and continue to embrace Yassar Arafat.

Also in the region, though a major state-sponsor of terrorism and destabilizing influence in the region has been removed, the extremist regime of Tehran continues to fan the flames of violent intolerance.

While the Road Map to Peace process moves delicately forward, these issues—if you will excuse the analogy—only add speed bumps and detours.

It would be a shame to see this historic opportunity squandered. I salute the Administration for doggedly pursuing peace by bringing Israelis, Palestinians, and the international community together. I urge President Bush to insert himself forcibly into the equation so that Israel, Palestine, and surrounding countries know that their future relationships with the United States revolve around this issue. After a successful campaign in Iraq, peace in this region has the best chance in years. If it can only be achieved, I also expect the entire world to benefit from a subsequent reduction of terrorism.

Mr. Chairman, we are truly at a historic crossroads and I thank you for this opportunity today to explore these issues and look toward the future.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD TO THE HONORABLE WILLIAM J. BURNS, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, TOGETHER WITH RESPONSES THERETO

Question:

Has the United States of America made it crystal clear to Prime Minister Abbas that if the terrorism, if the killing of Israeli civilians and soldiers doesn't end, that there will be no Palestinian state?

Response:

The President, the Secretary of State, as well as a number of other senior U.S. officials, have repeatedly made clear the American position that for there to be peace, terror must end. The roadmap emphasizes that "a two state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will only be achieved through an end to violence and terrorism." As President Bush stated after his the June 4 Aqaba summit, "Prime Minister Abbas . . . knows that there will be no state if terror prevails."

Question:

Has the President received full commitment and endorsement from the Arab nations for Israel's right to exist as a sovereign nation?

Response:

- Three Arab states currently extend full diplomatic recognition to Israel—Egypt, Jordan, and Mauritania.
- The PLO continues to recognize the right of Israel to exist as a sovereign nation, as Prime Minister Abbas reiterated at the Aqaba summit of June 4.
- The roadmap calls for Arab state acceptance of full normal relations with Israel as an integral element of Phase III. The Saudi proposal adopted at the Beirut Summit of the Arab League is encouraging in this respect. The U.S. continues to push hard for roadmap implementation and progress toward peace.

Question:

Since some Arab nations still continue to boycott and not even recognize Israel, and the fact that the President has made a sincere effort to recognize a Palestinian state, have we also received full endorsement from the Israeli government through Prime Minister Sharon and his government to give full recognition to the Palestinians to establish a sovereign state as well?

Response:

Israel has pledged to recognize a state for the Palestinian people. Prime Minister Sharon reiterated, at the June 4 Aqaba summit, that Israel “has lent its strong support for President Bush’s vision expressed on June 24, 2002, of two states, Israel and a Palestinian state, living side-by-side in peace and security.” Phase II of the roadmap calls for the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

Question:

What role do you envision for the United Nations, apart from any of its members? Would Kofi Annan have to consult with Libya about his actions? What role do you see for the various European institutions to play, if any, in the peace process?

Response:

The UN Secretariat and the EU have been valuable contributors to the Quartet, which remains a useful mechanism to coordinate our message of international support for the President’s June 24, 2002 vision of a two state solution, and the roadmap designed to implement that vision. In addition, both the UN and the EU have played important roles in the International Task Force on Palestinian Reform, and in formal and informal international efforts to address the humanitarian and economic problems in the West Bank and Gaza. With regard to any monitoring mechanism under the roadmap, the United States will have the lead role on security-related issues, and on the overall direction of the monitoring effort. The UN and EU will be in position to make important contributions to these efforts, particularly on reform, economic, and humanitarian issues.

Question:

What is the role of the Arab leaders to put additional pressure and encouragement on Yasser Arafat to step aside to allow the roadmap to bear significant fruit?

Response:

We have urged Arab states to give their full support to Abu Mazen and his government in the cause of ending terrorism and setting the Palestinians on a course toward a negotiated settlement. The summit meetings in Sharm Al-Sheikh (attended by representatives of Arab countries) and Aqaba highlighted this new role for Abu Mazen, and were an important step forward.

Question:

So, with that in mind, what steps are being taken to strengthen Abu Mazen’s position vis-à-vis Yasser Arafat’s position? What is the level of commitment from Arab leaders to ensure that Arafat does not become an obstacle to peace? What, if anything, has been promised by those leaders?

Response:

It is important to take steps now that reinforce recent progress and signal international support for Prime Minister Abbas and his Cabinet. We have asked Arab League members to fulfill their financial commitments to the PA. The President, Secretary, and other senior officials have also publicly expressed their strong support for Abu Mazen. The summit meetings in Sharm Al-Sheikh (attended by representatives of Arab countries) and Aqaba highlighted this new role for Abu Mazen, and were an important step forward.

Question:

What are we doing about people who exist on both sides of this conflict? What is the U.S. doing to build constituencies for peace in the region?

Response:

- The U.S. provides assistance to the Palestinian people both through non-governmental organizations and UNRWA. We have pledged over \$95 million for UNRWA so far for FY2003, in addition to the assistance of \$125 million for the Palestinian people administered by USAID. There is also \$50 million available from the FY03 supplemental appropriation that can be used for various activities.
- The Administration has waived the prohibition on direct aid to the PA and told Congress that the U.S. would be providing \$20 million in direct assistance. We

will seek to use this money to help the PA Ministry of Finance launch a quick-disbursing program for the repair and rehabilitation of municipal infrastructure and services. Since the start of the Intifada, many areas have seen extensive damage to infrastructure, businesses, homes, and agricultural assets, and the poorly performing economy has led to a sharp drop-off in municipal taxes that feed essential services.

- This assistance will give PA Prime Minister Abbas a needed political boost, and serve as a strong signal of U.S. support. This will help him consolidate authority, and will help be seen by the Palestinian public as an effective leader who can deliver on core issues.
- The funds being provided by the U.S. will be under the direct control and supervision of Palestinian Minister of Finance Salam Fayyad. The credibility that Minister Fayyad has brought to the PA budget process and financial management makes this transfer possible. He has established transparent and accountable systems in the Ministry that are consistent with or exceed world standards. Israel has recognized his success in building a credible public finance system, and has resumed its direct tax revenue transfers to the PA.
- We will keep track of how these funds are used via our ongoing consultations with Minister Fayyad, the constant contact between our Consulate General in Jerusalem and other PA officials, and our USAID presence in Gaza and the West Bank. All parties are well aware that the prospect of future such direct transfers would depend on the success of this one.
- The U.S. is engaged in encouraging the development of constituencies for peace in the region. Among our initiatives are the U.S.-Middle East Peace Initiative and the Middle East Free Trade Area, the former designed to spur the expansion of political opportunity and the latter economic liberalization. We also continue to support NGOs which train Palestinians and Israelis in tolerance and conflict resolution.

Question:

How can Prime Minister Abbas in any reasonable expectation have the capability to deliver on what we all hope is his genuine mission?

Response:

- Prime Minister Abbas has a difficult task before him, but he has a number of assets to work with. PM Abbas has talented and effective Cabinet Ministers in key positions, particularly in the security and financial fields. Furthermore, he is prepared to work with U.S., regional, and Quartet supporters of the roadmap, whose backing has already been demonstrated at the Sharm al-Sheikh and Aqaba summits, as well as at the Quartet meeting in Amman.
- Israeli cooperation, pledged by Prime Minister Sharon at Aqaba, will provide another pillar of support. These factors, in addition to the key support of the Palestinian people, endow PM Abbas with the capacity to deliver on his promises made at Aqaba.

Question:

Given your direct participation in the summit at Aqaba, Jordan, could you please share with us what were the primary areas of discussion between the leaders?

Response:

At Aqaba, both sides made very clear commitments to the President's vision, and, most importantly, acknowledged their own responsibilities and obligations to achieve it. In discussions with PM Abbas, he made an unambiguous renunciation of terror and called for the armed intifada to end. He acknowledged Jewish suffering "throughout history" and made an important commitment to work vigorously against incitement to violence and hatred. PM Sharon spoke with admirable clarity in support of the President's vision. He made commitments to improve the humanitarian situation of Palestinians and respect their dignity. And he made the important statements that support the real possibility of a two state solution, including an acknowledgement of the importance of territorial contiguity, and an undertaking to begin dismantling unauthorized outposts.

Question:

At the recent Aqaba summit, the President referenced the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state. Does this mean that an agreement was reached on the issue of refugees and the "right of return?" Will Palestinian refugees be absorbed into a newly created Palestinian state, as Jews forced them from their homes in Arab countries

after 1947 were absorbed by Israel? What monetary and material steps have the Arab states taken to ensure this?

Response:

No agreement on refugees was sought in Aqaba. The roadmap specifies that an “agreed, just, fair, and realistic solution” to the refugee problem will be concluded in Phase III.

Question:

It was reported in a May 28th Haaretz interview with [PM] Mahmoud Abbas that “Abbas says the Americans proposed he not pay any attention to any of the talk about [Israeli] comments and reservations” and that the U.S. had promised they, too, “would not allow Sharon to evade a declaration about an end to violence and incitement, as required by the first article of the roadmap.” Is there any truth to this statement? Please elaborate.

Response:

In accordance with the roadmap, the U.S. expects a comprehensive end to violence and official incitement by any party. As President Bush made clear at Aqaba on June 4: “Both Prime Ministers here agree that progress toward peace also requires an end to violence and the elimination of all forms of hatred and prejudice and official incitement—in school books, in broadcasts, and in the words used by political leaders. Both leaders understand that a future of peace cannot be founded on hatred and falsehood and bitterness.”

Question:

What is the U.S. position on “performance vs. timelines” and what understandings on this issue have you reached with the Israelis, Palestinians, and the members of the Quartet?

Response:

The U.S. is committed to the roadmap, which is performance-based and goal-driven; performance will continue to determine progress on the timeline. We have been very clear with the parties and with other Quartet members on this point.

Question:

The Quartet’s roadmap calls on Israel to freeze all settlement activity including natural growth. It also calls on Israel to immediately dismantle settlements erected since March 2001. The President’s June 24, 2002, speech calls on Israel to stop settlement activity. At the Aqaba summit, Israeli Prime Minister Sharon said that “Israel is a society governed by the rule of law” and that he would begin removing the “un-authorized outposts.” Please elaborate upon the U.S. position regarding outposts vs. settlements and how plan to reconcile the differences between the U.S. and Israeli views, with those of the Quartet’s roadmap.

Response:

Settlement activity remains inconsistent with President Bush’s vision for a two-state solution; under the roadmap, settlements outposts erected since March 2001 must be immediately dismantled. The roadmap also calls for a settlements freeze in the first phase. Ultimate resolution of the settlement issue will be the product of negotiations between the parties.

Question:

Is the policy stated by President Bush last June still the policy of the United States?

Response:

The policy set forth by President Bush in his June 24, 2002, speech remains the policy of the United States. American efforts since then have been and continue to be undertaken in the context of President Bush’s June 24 policy.

Question:

Polls, opinion pieces, editorials, and other articles in Spain and Great Britain show a disproportional preference to the Palestinian side in the Middle East conflict. For example, a poll taken by the Spanish newspaper, La Vanguardia, illustrates how 62.7% of the Spaniards asked thought that the Palestinians were in the right in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, versus 37% who sided with Israel. This seems to be indicative of a difference between the U.S. and its EU partners’ views towards the conflict and its resolution. How is the U.S. prepared to reconcile these differences? Given that Spain and Great Britain were our strongest allies in Operation Iraqi Freedom, did

the U.S. secure an agreement with these partners on how Phase I of the roadmap was going to be carried out? Was the roadmap part of the discussions at the UN prior to military action in Iraq and, most recently, prior to the vote on the sanctions resolution?

Response:

The U.S. and EU, as members of the Quartet, have worked and continue to work together towards the common goal of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The substantial congruence of policies among the U.S. and its Quartet partners is reflected in the roadmap itself. Our common, overriding obligation is to get the parties themselves to implement their pledges. Our Quartet partners have been especially active in supporting Palestinian institutional reform and providing essential humanitarian aid, both critical roles as we move forward. We continue to work with the EU on attempting to reconcile outstanding issues of disagreement, particularly concerning the full designation of Hamas and the cessation of meetings with Arafat.

Question:

My colleagues Mr. Lantos, Ms. Ros-Lehtinen, and Mr. Ackerman have sent a letter to Javier Solana regarding the commitment, or lack thereof, of European allies with respect to the roadmap by continuing to meet with Arafat. Can you comment on reports that the EU plans to submit a new plan to parallel the President's initiative.

Response:

The U.S. continues to press EU members not to meet with Arafat, who is not a useful interlocutor. Some EU states have acceded to our request, but the EU's informal consensus is to continue to meet with Arafat. We have no knowledge of an EU plan for a parallel initiative to the road map.

Question:

Will the Administration be seeking separate funding for the coordinator and the activities of the team working on the Palestinian security plan? Where will the funds be coming from? How does the new U.S. structure correspond with or supplement legislative mandates regarding assistance to the West Bank and Gaza, U.S. contributions to UNRWA? Is the authorization of appropriations in the Foreign Relations Authorization Act recently passed by the Committee sufficient to achieve U.S. goals?

Response:

The initial costs for Ambassador Wolf and his team are being borne within funding already available for security and Department operations within the region. As activities proceed, the Department is evaluating how best to fund requirements for each phase of the process. Funding for Ambassador Wolf and his team will not affect UNRWA contributions.

Question:

How will verification be performed? Will the monitoring mechanism be broken down by sector and issue—that is, terrorism/security, economic, legal, financial—or will it be combined into a unified mechanism? If individual mechanisms, will these efforts be implemented incrementally or concurrently?

Response:

The roadmap calls for informal monitoring in phase I using existing, on the ground resources. For our part, Ambassador Wolf has already begun a monitoring and coordination process designed to help the parties with implementation and identify areas for action. Existing structures such as the Task Force on Palestinian Reform and the Local Area Coordinating Committee are multilateral efforts to track conditions and assist the parties on reform and humanitarian issues. As we move into the next phase, further consultations will be needed to develop more formal structures.

Question:

UNRWA facilities in the West Bank and Gaza have been used for terrorist activity. What efforts will be taken during the coming months to ensure that attacks are not being launched from the refugee camps? How is this component being addressed in the security plan?

Response:

We have seen no evidence to support the allegation that UNRWA facilities in the West Bank and Gaza have been used for terrorist activity. Nevertheless, UNRWA has implemented an enhanced random monitoring process of all of its schools, health clinics and other facilities in the West Bank and Gaza to ensure that its fa-

cilities are not misused for terrorist activity. Responsibility for security in the camps themselves rests with the Government of Israel or the Palestinian Authority, depending upon the location of the camp.

Question:

Has the Administration reviewed section 1003 of the Anti-Terrorism Act to determine whether the PLO should be allowed to continue to maintain an office in the US? Would any determination also include the PLO observer office at the UN? Has the Administration determined yet whether the PLO is to be re-designated as a terrorist organization?

Response:

The President determined, on April 16, 2003, that it is important to the national security interests of the U.S. to waive Anti-Terrorism Act restrictions on the PLO office in Washington, DC. Those restrictions do not apply to the PLO observer mission at the UN. The Administration currently has no plans to designate the PLO as a terrorist organization.

Question:

With regard to the reform of Palestinian security services, have we decided whether we will agree to any of the members of the Palestinian Authority involved in violent attacks on Israelis within the Green Line—or for that matter, the Karine-A incident—being involved in any newly reorganized Palestinian Authority? What criteria have you established for the recruitment of Palestinian security personnel?

Response:

We expect any individual and organization that would participate in public life in the Palestinian leadership to be firmly committed to democracy, the rule of law, and eradicating terrorism. The bottom line is that from the leadership of the Palestinian security services down to the rank and file, there must be commitment and action to dismantle terror groups and ending terror attacks. We have already seen progress on this front under the stewardship of Mohammed Dahlan, as Minister of State for Security Affairs.

Question:

White House Spokesman Scott McClellan recently urged all parties in the region to dismantle the “infrastructure of terror.” What commitments did the President receive from our Arab allies during the summit at Sharm al-Sheikh to crack down on the financing of and the providing of safe haven and other forms of support for Palestinian terrorist organizations? More specifically, what steps are Egypt and Jordan taking to crack down on the smuggling of illegal weapons into the West Bank and Gaza? Does the U.S. have any independent assessment about how illegal weapons are being smuggled into the West Bank and Gaza?

Response:

At Sharm al-Sheikh, President Bush received commitments from the leaders of key Arab states to cut off assistance and the flow of money and weapons to terrorist groups, and to help PM Abbas rid Palestinian areas of terrorism. The GOJ's security and military apparatus has worked vigilantly to upgrade its border security and train its forces to counter cross-border smuggling. They have been particularly effective in blocking efforts by transnational groups to use Jordan as a theater for weapons smuggling. The Government of Egypt has interdicted weapons destined for the West Bank and Gaza, and is also cooperating fully with us to combat terrorist financing and money laundering. The Department does not independently track the means by which illegal weapons are smuggled into the West Bank and Gaza; a variety of sources confirm, however, that weapons are obtained through cross-border smuggling and from criminal networks in Israel.

Question:

Have we indicated to the Palestinians that Tanzim and al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades—organizations that are part of Arafat's Fatah organization—must be shut down? Will the revolving doors on PA prisons be locked?

Response:

The U.S. has been emphatic that all organizations that employ terror must be dismantled. The President, Secretary, and other senior officials have repeatedly made this clear to the Palestinian leadership. Palestinian Prime Minister Abbas has likewise called for “one authority . . .” The development of an effective and accountable Palestinian security service is a major goal of U.S. efforts, and we are doing everything we can to promote it. We expect the PA to prevent terrorist acts and hold

those involved accountable for their activities. Incarceration of terrorists in secure locations is an important element of accountability.

Question:

What knowledge do you have about the use, in operations against Israel, of techniques and equipment provided by the U.S. to the PA? When training "official" Palestinian security organizations, how does the U.S. ensure that the materials and knowledge provided to them does not disseminate to militant organizations openly engaged in terror?

Response:

This question would be better addressed in a classified briefing.

Question:

Can you describe the division of labor between the U.S. and other Quartet members regarding the training of the Palestinian security services? What other countries will be involved in the training of reformed Palestinian security organs? What will be the role of Egypt and Jordan?

Response:

Among the Quartet members, the U.S. is responsible for dealing with and monitoring of Palestinian security services. The governments of Egypt and Jordan have played and continue to play a supporting role in security training.

Question:

As has been reported and the President underscored at the Aqaba summit, the U.S. will be providing training and support to a new Palestinian security apparatus. What type of training will they receive? What are the components of a security plan, structure, and chain of command that are being developed for the Palestinian security apparatus?

Response:

This question would be better addressed in a classified briefing.

Question:

Does the new compressive plan ensure that the Palestinian Prime Minister's office and Security minister, Mohammed Dahlan, are in control of security forces? Can you verify reports that Dahlan offered to buy illegal weapons carried by members of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades? Has Dahlan received money from the U.S., Britain, and other European countries to buy their weapons?

Response:

Minister of State Security Mohammed Dahlan is the cabinet official responsible for the PA security forces, and is recognized as such by the U.S. Subsequent questions would be better addressed in a classified briefing.

Question:

The Quartet's roadmap and the Zinni plan call for unconditional ceasefires. What is the position of the U.S. on the ceasefire issue? What steps can be undertaken if terrorist groups refuse to put down their weapons?

Response:

The U.S. welcomes efforts to achieve a comprehensive cessation of violence and terror. We have been very clear that these efforts are not an end in themselves; they need to be a first step towards fulfillment of the larger goal—as outlined in the roadmap—of a complete end to violence and terror, including dismantling the terrorist capacities of all groups engaged in violence. All sides, particularly the Palestinian Authority and regional states, must work to cut off support to and dismantle terrorist groups.

Question:

How can the process move forward if the terrorist groups continue to operate and the central Palestinian Authority refuses to put them out of business? What are we telling the Palestinians they must do regarding the infrastructure of terror?

Response:

The U.S. has made consistently clear to the PA that terror groups must be dismantled. At the Aqaba summit President Bush made this point forcefully to PM Abbas and PM Abbas made clear his determination to dismantle these groups. The U.S. has made clear that cessations of hostilities, while a positive development, are only a first step in eradicating the terrorist infrastructure. We are already seeing

some progress on this front in Security Minister Dahlan's efforts to reform the PA security services. We will continue to make clear to the PA that dismantling the terror groups is a *sine qua non* for ultimate settlement and a Palestinian state.

Question:

The Quartet's roadmap and President Bush's June 24, 2002, speech called for a new Palestinian constitution and a new democratic Palestinian state. Is the U.S. providing assistance for this constitutional process? What is the vehicle for such assistance? Are we currently using or considering such funds authorized for the Middle East Partnership Initiative for this purpose?

Response:

The U.S. strongly supports the development of a democratic, constitutional Palestinian state. We are working closely with the Task Force on Palestinian Reform on constitutional reform issues along with other aspect of institutional reform. The goal is to help Palestinians develop accountable, democratic institutions in preparation for statehood. Among the various technical assistance projects in the area of responsive and accountable government are: a multi-million dollar project to strengthen the Palestinian Legislative Council; a smaller project to support fair and free elections; and numerous projects designed to strengthen civil society and the legal system.

Question:

Will the reforms on the Palestinian Authority as initiated by the appointment of Mahmoud Abbas as Prime Minister and the inception of the Administration's roadmap include other reforms?

Response:

While the obligations set out by the roadmap are necessary for peace, the U.S. encourages further reforms of the PA undertaken in the spirit of President Bush's June 24, 2002, speech. PA reforms toward greater democratization, accountability, and increased security are welcome even if not specifically enumerated in the roadmap.

Question:

On May 21st, the Prime Minister was quoted as saying in an interview with Egypt's semi-official weekly that: "Arafat is the man to whom we refer. We do not do anything without his approval. We will not allow any serious differences between Arafat and me." Can you please comment on this statement? Has Arafat's influence been neutralized?

Response:

The U.S. has been very clear that we do not regard Arafat as a useful interlocutor. We are encouraged by the installation of Prime Minister Abbas and his cabinet; we will continue to work closely with them in the interests of developing a democratic and accountable Palestinian government freed from association with terror. The U.S. continues to make clear to our Quartet partners that meeting with and bolstering Arafat is counterproductive to peace.

