

THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN LEBANON

HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18, 2007

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST
AND SOUTH ASIA,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:10 a.m. in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Gary L. Ackerman, (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. ACKERMAN. The subcommittee will come to order. A bit more than 2 years ago, on February 15, 2005, the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, along with 22 other people, was killed by a massive car bomb. Nothing in Lebanon has been the same since.

Aroused from their torpor and disorganization, the assassination of Rafiq Hariri prompted the Lebanese people to undertake a long-overdue democratic revolution and reassertion of their national independence.

Syria's brutal gamble on assassination was intended to reinforce its domination of Lebanon. But rather than solidifying the system of foreign control, the murder of Hariri instead led to the expulsion of the Syrian military and intelligence forces which had occupied Lebanon for a generation, and the democratic election of a modern, liberal, Western-oriented Lebanese Government.

Only a year ago, Syrian President Assad was answering questions posed by the Chief U.N. Investigator. The new Government of Lebanon, led by the March 14 movement with a majority of 72 out of 128 seats, was, if not gaining strength, at least gaining its sea legs, and working to build a consensus on the most difficult and divisive issues in Lebanon.

But over the summer of 2006, Lebanon's hopes were nearly extinguished due to the war initiated by Hezbollah's unprovoked cross-border aggression against Israel. Though power in Beirut had shifted, Iranian and Syrian ambitions had not been extinguished; and Hezbollah, that terrorist attack dog, was more than ready to plunge Lebanon into a war for the sake of its own greater glory and thirst for political power.

Yet again, Lebanese interests were sacrificed in a gamble on violence. And yet again, it is the ordinary people of Lebanon who came out the losers. The summer was materially devastating for Lebanon, but the damage to Lebanon's democracy remains to this day unhealed.

Beginning in December of last year and continuing to this day, Hezbollah and other pro-Syrian forces within Lebanon have been engaged in an extra-legal attempt to bring down the government of Prime Minister Fuad Siniora through massive street protests and targeted acts of violence. The proximate cause was the Lebanese Government's decision not to shield the Assad regime in Syria, and to support the International Tribunal investigating the death of Rafiq Hariri.

In truth, the struggle in Lebanon is much more fundamental. It is about whether the majority or the minority will rule. It is about whether the democratically-elected government or a foreign-backed terrorist mob will govern. It is about whether legitimacy in Lebanon derives from the consent of the governed, or from the whims of foreign interests expressed through murder.

The United States has an enormous stake in the outcome of this struggle. And I am sorry to note that since the Donors' Conference in January, the Bush administration has been excruciatingly quiet about Lebanon. Based on their history, the Lebanese people have a deep-seated and well-founded fear of abandonment. Unfortunately, the lack of regularized public attention to Lebanon by our Executive Branch has done much to validate their concerns.

Clearly, the \$1 billion of assistance the United States has pledged to Lebanon is nothing to take lightly. I am proud that the House, when it passed the fiscal year 2007 supplemental, included the \$770 million the President requested for assistance to the government and armed forces of Lebanon.

But more important than our money, though, it is vital, though it is vital, is our steady and clear commitment to Lebanon's democratically-elected government, to Lebanon's independence, and to Lebanon's sovereignty. I have called this hearing for just this reason.

It is also true that there is a limit to how close Lebanon's leaders can come to the United States. Thanks in large measure to the policies of the Bush administration, the extent of our nation's unpopularity makes an American embrace more like the kiss of death for any Lebanese, or indeed any Arab politician.

But there are still ways for us to show our support without tainting those we mean to help. The most obvious is for the United States to make greater use of the broad international consensus in support of the Lebanese Government. With the Secretary of State now committed to regular travel to the Middle East, it would be more than appropriate for her, while in the region, to arrange regular consultations with other interested nations on the question of how to continue to support the government of Prime Minister Siniora.

Moreover, strong consideration should be given to establishing a formal contact group on Lebanon that would include all the donor nations, the moderate Arab States, the United Nations, and the international financial institutions supporting Lebanon's financial and economic reform process. This group should have regularly scheduled high-level meetings to review and coordinate the provision of aid pledged to Lebanon, to monitor political developments within Lebanon, and to consult on ways to improve the implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701.

I would note here that while the Lebanese armed forces are finally operating in South Lebanon, the regular reports of Hezbollah's rearming should give us and the entire international community additional motivation to work aggressively in the present in order to prevent the repeat of last summer's horror show.

The situation in Lebanon is dire, but it is not too late to help save the Cedar Revolution. Our money is important, but our leadership is vital. Millions throughout Lebanon, the Middle East, and the rest of the world are watching Lebanon to see who will prevail. Will it be the freely-elected Government of Lebanon, in a constructive alliance with the international community? Or will it be Hezbollah and the Syrian and Iranian patrons?

There should be no doubt that Hezbollah, the Iranians, and the Syrians are committed to winning. The massive street protests and targeted killings, the rapid illicit rearmament of Hezbollah, and the provision of millions and millions of dollars of cash handouts for reconstruction and social welfare in South Lebanon show their commitment with unmistakable clarity. The simple question we are here to discuss today is what we are going to do in response.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ackerman follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE GARY L. ACKERMAN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK, AND CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

A bit more than two years ago, on February 15, 2005, former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, along with 22 other people, was killed by a massive car bomb.

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Only a year ago, Syrian President Asad was answering questions posed by the chief UN investigator. The new government of Lebanon, led by the March 14th Movement, with a majority of 72 out of 128 seats was, if not gaining in strength, at least gaining its sea legs, and was working to build consensus on the most difficult and divisive issues in Lebanon.

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Clearly, the \$1 billion dollars of assistance the United States has pledged to Lebanon is nothing to take lightly. I am proud that the House, when it passed the FY-07 supplemental included the \$770 million the President requested for assistance to the government and armed forces of Lebanon. But more important than our money—though it is vital—is our steady and clear commitment to Lebanon’s democratically elected government, to Lebanon’s independence and to Lebanon’s sovereignty. I have called this hearing for just this reason.

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Moreover, strong consideration should be given to establishing a formal contact group on Lebanon that would include the all of the donor nations, the moderate Arab states, the United Nations and the international financial institutions supporting Lebanon’s financial and economic reform process.

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The simple question we are here to discuss today is, what are we going to do in response?

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Barrett, any opening remarks?

Mr. BARRETT. No opening statements, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you. Mr. Klein?

Mr. KLEIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And just briefly, and thank you for the gentlemen to be here today and give us this important briefing.

I had the opportunity while I was still running for office to go to Israel during the last July. And I had been there many times before, but had never been in a situation outside of Haifa, and there is a community that is a sister city with my home city, Boca Raton, where the rockets, as we all know, were coming down in very abstract fashion. The terror was obviously very deep in the area, a lot of damage. And of course, there were difficulties on both sides of the border.

I met with the families of the kidnapped soldiers, as we all know. And unfortunately, nothing has happened there. The Lebanese

Government has done certain things to try to deal with its side of the border. But as the chairman just said, one of the great concerns for the international community, and certainly Israel and those aligned with trying to establish some stability in the region, is the rearming of the Hezbollah fighters in this area, and the terrorist groups in this area; and whether or not, what type of rockets, what kind of inventory, what kind of capability, whether it is just setting up the next round, may be more significant of another battle and another front, is very concerning to all of us, considering all the loss of life that went on on both sides of the border this past July.

So this is of great concern. The international community has unfortunately not been able to effectively stop it. We have had some briefings about some things getting stopped, and others getting through. Obviously Syria is part and parcel of the effort with Iran, and I think many of us feel there needs to definitely be some dialogue to put some pressure down. But this is of great concern.

And of course, as part of your comments today, I think we would all be interested in hearing your views on how this is progressing in terms of this rearming, what the status is, what you view as what are the alternatives and the likelihood of stopping it, and how do you see this playing out over the next number of months.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Carnahan.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to our witnesses today.

Given the unrest in Lebanon over the last few years, and especially the last few months, this hearing is very timely. Like many of my colleagues, I have a great concern about the influence of both Hezbollah and Iran infiltrating not only the borders of Lebanon, but also the political system and the government.

Mr. Welch, you note in your written testimony that the disarmament of Hezbollah and any other militias within Lebanon called for in multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions is essential to Lebanon's sovereignty and to a lasting peace. I am very interested in hearing you expand on those thoughts today.

While the United States has been contributing large sums of money to help rebuild Lebanon, I am also interested to hear from Mr. Ward what steps are being taken to prevent any of these funds from being obtained by any entity that supports terrorism. I strongly support our USAID efforts there; though like many, I ensure that none of these funds are being spent in any way that can be contrary to our position and to our interest.

So I look forward to hearing from you both today. Thank you.

Mr. ACKERMAN. The subcommittee is happy to note that we are joined by Mr. Issa of California.

I am now very pleased to turn to our very distinguished witnesses. Since March 2005, Ambassador David Welch has served as Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. Previously, Ambassador Welch served as Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations, as well as United States Ambassador to Egypt.

Ambassador Welch also served for 2 years as the Charges d'Affaires in Saudi Arabia, senior staff positions at the State Department, and at the National Security Council, and a number of diplo-

matic posts in the Middle East. A seasoned diplomat, it is a pleasure to welcome him back to the subcommittee.

We will also hear from Mark Ward, Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for USAID's Bureau of Asia and the Near East. Mr. Ward chairs USAID's Lebanon Reconstruction Task Force, having previously led USAID's task force efforts in 2005 to respond to the South Asian tsunami and the South Asian earthquake.

Mr. Ward is a career minister in the Senior Foreign Service, and has served in Pakistan, Egypt, the Philippines, and Russia. And we will hear from both of our witnesses after we hear from our very distinguished ranking Minority member, Mr. Pence.

Mr. PENCE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for calling this important hearing, and with such a distinguished panel of experts. Lebanon is truly a bag of contradictions, neighboring both Israel and Syria. And having both terrorist elements in its Parliament, as well as one of the last substantial Christian populations in the Middle East, this country, without question, is pivotal to our national interests and security.

Lebanon is also not a creation of the modern world. The scripture you and I both honor has no fewer than 14 references to the Cedars of Lebanon, which were a treasured value, physically imposing natural resource, and symbolic of might and beauty. It is that historic strength of Lebanon I think upon which much hope in this region rests.

And with that, I would ask unanimous consent to submit to the record my entire opening statement. And as a courtesy to my colleagues on the panel, allow us to move directly to hearing from our witnesses and questions, Mr. Chairman, thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Pence follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE MIKE PENCE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF INDIANA

Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling this important hearing and welcome to our distinguished witnesses.

Lebanon is a bag of contradictions.

Neighboring both Israel and Syria and having both terrorist elements in its parliament as well as one of the last substantial Christian populations in the Middle East, this country, without question, is pivotal to our national interests and security.

Mr. Chairman, Lebanon is also not a creation of the modern world. The Scripture you and I both honor, the Old Testament, has no fewer than 14 references to the "cedars of Lebanon" which were of treasured value—a physically imposing natural resource and symbolic of might and beauty.

In about 970 B.C., King Solomon began to build the first temple with the cedars of Lebanon, First Kings Five tells us, after renewing his kingdom's alliance with Hiram, king of Tyre (modern day Lebanon). Solomon arranged what had to have been one of the first bilateral trade agreements ever—between Israel and Tyre—to bring Lebanon's cedars to the Jewish temple. Hiram then praised God for the wise leader of Israel.

Three thousand years later, relations between Israel and Lebanon are still significant to world events.

Sadly, the Lebanon of modern history is much grimmer. Beirut of half a century ago was routinely described as "the Paris of the Middle East." Then, it became one of the first sites of car bombings, suicide attacks, sectarian violence, militias and a "state of nature." The concept of a "failed state" described Lebanon of the 1980's all too well.

With the end of Lebanon's civil war in 1990, hope reigned anew. However, history moves in fits and starts, and progress does not always proceed in direct linear fashion. The events of 2005 and 2006 are very troubling and still reverberate throughout Lebanon.

One major problem facing Lebanon today is the same question facing it since its civil war broke out in 1975: whether a multi confessional society can function peacefully. Can modern Islam allow a vibrant Christian minority to thrive in its midst?

Mr. Chairman, I am concerned about the Christian exodus from the Middle East. The region is home to the three great monotheistic Abrahamic faiths. But if certain Islamists had their way, it would be home to only one faith, practiced in a particular way depending on the country or region. I'm concerned about the removal of Christians from their historic lands, some communities extending back two thousand years to the birth of Christianity. Lebanon no longer has a Christian majority but the treatment of the substantial and dwindling minority is something I watch with great interest.

Another large issue is the question of Syrian, and to a lesser extent, Iran, meddling in Lebanon.

Syria is a parasitic menace which withdrew only when it believed its penetration of Lebanese governance was so complete that it was no longer required. Much of Lebanon's present troubles can be traced to the Syrian occupation that went from 1976 to 2005. Still other problems arose from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard's virtual creation of Hezbollah in 1982. To be sure, Syria and Iran have indigenous allies in Lebanon, "willing executioners," if you will, as well as a paralyzed political system. But these hostile foreign powers, particularly Syria, remain a present threat and problem to Lebanon.

Mr. Chairman, THAT, and not the Bush Administration's Middle East policy or strategy or efforts is the main problem in Lebanon today. Mr. Chairman, I notice you did not say that the "road to peace runs through Damascus." I would argue that the largest OBSTACLE to peace is in Damascus.

Mr. Chairman, I wish I shared Secretary Welch's optimism that the UN investigation into the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri is progressing. But, it appears that another extension means that it will take more than three years for there to be an official report on this atrocity.

Mr. Chairman, there are many troubling issues in Lebanon and I thank you for calling this hearing to help us shed some light on the subject. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank the ranking member. Mr. Inglis, would you care to make any opening comments?

Mr. INGLIS. No, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to hearing from the witnesses.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you. Without objection, the full written statements of our expert witnesses today will be entered into the record. I would ask you to summarize those submissions for the committee, and proceed in any fashion in which you would like.

And we begin with Secretary Welch.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE C. DAVID WELCH, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. WELCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, members of the committee, for coming to the hearing.

Mr. Chairman, I am happy to appear before you today. It is the first time I have had the honor of testifying to your subcommittee and your chairmanship, and I welcome the opportunity to continue our work together.

I also welcome the chance to make a few observations on the situation in Lebanon, both in response to the concerns that you have mentioned in your opening remarks, Mr. Chairman, but also I think this is an appropriate occasion for both the Congress and the administration together to signal our support for freedom and democracy in Lebanon, and to send that message to the many, many Lebanese who I know are watching and listening.

We have been working hard since the passage of Security Council Resolution 1701 in August of last year to create the necessary

conditions for a lasting peace in this region. It has been a strong and determined effort, but it faces strong and determined opposition from certain quarters: In particular, Hezbollah and its allies, who enjoy considerable support from Syria and Iran, and who have, during this period, mounted a campaign which continues to this moment to affect, and maybe even to remove, the legitimate Government of Lebanon.

Their aims are to undermine a majority that was democratically-elected; to thwart the implementation of a Security Council Resolution that they understand undermines their ability to operate the way they used to; to prevent the establishment of a special tribunal that might try those suspected of involvement in the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri and other prominent pro-democracy personalities. And of course, to promote the reemergence of Syrian influence in Lebanon.

This campaign has effectively paralyzed the normal operations of the Lebanese Government, and it has continued to affect the Lebanese economy in a negative way. We consider that it is imperative both to Lebanon and beyond Lebanon to regional stability that these forces not succeed.

To that end, we have leveraged a lot of diplomatic effort, considerable economic support, military assistance of a new and unprecedented scale to combat these forces. We have made progress, but there is a lot of work to do, as you all have observed.

Mr. Ward will shortly make some remarks about our economic assistance, a very large portion of which is still pending Congressional action in the supplemental. I am not going to say very much on that right now, though I would welcome any questions in the colloquy to discuss the terms under which we would be providing this assistance, if there are any concerns in the subcommittee about those.

Let me make a few remarks on security assistance as part of that, though. Since last August, the Lebanese armed forces have deployed to the southern part of Lebanon in a very significant military deployment, going down to the so-called blue line between Lebanon and Israel for the first time in almost 30 years.

The UNIFIL deployments now are almost fully up to the scale foreshadowed in the resolution last August. There are over 13,000 UNIFIL personnel, from nearly 30 troop-contributing countries, serving in southern Lebanon and off the shores of Lebanon in a maritime task force. That is many multiples the number of UNIFIL forces deployed before last July's inception of hostilities by Hezbollah.

The deployment has led to better coordination between UNIFIL, the Lebanese Army, and the Israel defense forces along the blue line. There is no longer an overt armed presence on the part of Hezbollah in this area of southern Lebanon.

That said, we are not convinced that that area has been completely cleared of weapons and personnel, and we are urging the Lebanese Army and UNIFIL to continue to take a very active role in tackling that problem.

You mentioned the arms embargo, sir. Resolution 1701 imposed a legally binding obligation on all states to prevent the sale and supply of weapons and such material to anybody in Lebanon unless

it is going under the authorization of the government or UNIFIL. In addition to that, the recent resolution passed on Iran's nuclear activities imposed an embargo on the export of arms from Iran, anyplace.

We have called on all U.N. states to act aggressively to enforce this embargo. The Lebanese Government has deployed thousands of troops to its border with Syria to reinforce the border, and to prevent weapon smuggling.

Those steps, while notable and necessary, have not been sufficient. The border between Lebanon and Syria remains highly porous. In his most recent report to the Security Council on the status of Resolution 1701, the Secretary General cited reports which indicated serious breaches of the arms embargo across that border. It is clear, in his judgment, and it is clear in our own independently, that Hezbollah continues to rearm. And we can see no other source for such assistance than Syria or Iran.

We are encouraging the Lebanese Army and UNIFIL to take a more assertive role in stopping smuggling. And part of our security assistance has been channeled for that purpose. We have devoted a lot of accelerated security assistance to get spare parts for vehicles and helicopters, because the existing Lebanese Army equipment needs repair and modernization. We have also delivered new Humvees, 30 of them, to help the Lebanese Army patrol the south and other areas of Lebanon.

We have sent in some small-arms ammunition and small arms to augment the Lebanese Army's low stocks of weapons and ammunition, and we have provided substantial training for Lebanese Army officers.

In the request we have in front of the Congress in the supplemental, there is a significant amount for security assistance to Lebanon: \$220 million. This would address remaining equipment and shortfalls in equipment and shortfalls in training.

The President has also requested \$60 million in support for the internal security forces of Lebanon, to fund a comprehensive train-and-equip program. These forces, as you know, are devoted to police functions, which should normally, they should have the responsibility for it, but too often it had to have been carried out by the Lebanese Army.

An important part of this strategy is to maintain pressure on the adversaries of stability in Lebanon, in particular Syria and Iran. We work with the international community, as you suggest, in informal and more formal groupings, to achieve this, and to continue the isolation of these regimes diplomatically and politically until they demonstrate their willingness to behave more responsibly.

Syria has shown an eagerness to court the international community, including the United States. But all efforts that we have seen at engaging them have yet to produce a change in their tactics. We have a diplomatic presence in Damascus, and we will continue that. The purpose of this is to give them channels by which they can prove their renunciation of sponsorship of terrorism, to show that they will end the laxity of controls on the flow of foreign fighters through Syria into Iraq, to deal with the Palestinian rejectionist terrorist groups that are present in Damascus, and to improve Syria's own domestic civil society record.

Another thing I would like to highlight is this issue of the investigation into the murders of former Prime Minister Hariri and others. This independent investigation continues under the leadership of a Belgian prosecutor, Mr. Brammertz. To build cases for future prosecutions, Mr. Brammertz is, in my judgment, commendably discreet about the results of the investigation so far. However, he has reported that he is making good progress, and that he is beginning to see the approach of the end of the investigation.

With that in mind, the council has approved the process of establishing a special tribunal for Lebanon to try any of those implicated in these murders. This would be done ideally by an international agreement between the United Nations and Lebanon.

However, the Assad regime, Hezbollah, and pro-Syrian elements within Lebanon have resisted establishment of this tribunal, and have thwarted attempts through the normal constitutional process in Lebanon to see it brought into force.

Our President and Secretary of State have been very clear about the commitment of the United States to the establishment of the tribunal. Obviously, it would be preferable to do so by agreement between the United Nations and the Lebanese Government. But if the Lebanese Government is unable to approve the agreement, the Security Council may need to consider other mechanisms for establishing the tribunal, including under Security Council Chapter Seven authority.

The Lebanese people want to see justice done in this case. That is the sentiment of a majority of the Lebanese. It is the sentiment of the majority of the Lebanese Parliament, which has been unable to meet on the issue, because a minority in Lebanon continues to block the process and, in the event, also to paralyze operations, normal operations of the government.

We have good partnership with European and regional allies in supporting a sovereign Lebanon. As you know, Mr. Chairman, European states, including NATO members, provide the bulk of the force contributions to UNIFIL. Significant monetary assistance has already been provided to the Lebanese Government by our partners, and more has been pledged.

France and the United Kingdom are key allies on the Security Council in working with us on these issues. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other regional partners have provided significant financial assistance. We maintain a good and productive dialogue with the Arab League. Our regional friends, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, also have played important roles in endeavoring to mediate the political crisis in Lebanon.

So in short, we have some support and help, and we are working hard to maintain that and advance it.

Mr. Chairman, with your permission I will pause there, and ask my colleague, Mr. Ward, if he would like to contribute any remarks.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Welch follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE C. DAVID WELCH, ASSISTANT SECRETARY,
BUREAU OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Thank you, Mister Chairman, and other distinguished Members of the Committee for inviting me here today. I welcome the opportunity to discuss the important developments in Lebanon and the ways in which the U.S. and the international com-

munity can help resolve the current crisis and create the conditions for a strong, sovereign Lebanon and a lasting peace in the region. President Bush and Secretary Rice have underscored the commitment of the United States to Lebanon on numerous occasions, and we are working with key partners to ensure full implementation of all UN Security Council Resolutions on Lebanon and to assist the Lebanese Government to assert its sovereignty throughout the country.

The democratically-elected Government of Lebanon is currently under siege by Hizballah, its allies, and other pro-Syrian elements. Among their aims are to undermine the democratically elected majority, thwart the implementation of UNSCR 1701, to prevent the establishment of the Special Tribunal to try the suspects involved in the assassination of Rafiq Hariri and other prominent pro-democracy voices, and promote Syrian influence within Lebanon. It is imperative to Lebanon and to regional stability that they not succeed.

The United Nations Security Council voiced its commitment to support the Lebanese people in their goal of a fully sovereign democratic state when it passed UNSCR 1559 (September 2, 2004) and UNSCR 1680 (May 17, 2006). Security Council Resolution 1559, in particular called for foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon and for the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias. A framework for establishing Lebanese sovereignty goes back even further to the Taif Accord of 1989 and UNSCR 425 (March 19, 1978).

The brutal assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and 22 others on February 14, 2005 brought the Lebanese people to the streets demanding an end to violence and foreign intervention in Lebanon's internal affairs. Two months later, Syria withdrew its military forces from Lebanon, ending a nearly 30-year occupation. The Security Council expressed its solidarity with the people of Lebanon and passed UNSCR 1595 that established the UN International Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIC) to assist the Lebanese authorities in their investigation of PM Hariri's murder.

Since August of last year, the United States and our partners have focused on implementation of UNSCR 1701, which created a ceasefire in the conflict between Hizballah and Israel and established the conditions necessary for a lasting peace. We have mobilized an expanded UNIFIL force, over 13,000 troops, that has assisted the Lebanese Army to deploy to the south of Lebanon for the first time in almost forty years, raised large sums of money in the billions of dollars to support the relief and reconstruction efforts of the Lebanese Government, and worked to implement an arms embargo aimed at preventing the Hizballah from rearming.

In the midst of this process Hizballah and its allies, with support from Syria and Iran, have mounted a growing campaign to overthrow Lebanon's legitimate, elected Government. This campaign has effectively paralyzed the Lebanese Government and is further eroding the Lebanese economy. In November 2006, the Hizballah-led opposition engineered the resignation of six members of Prime Minister Siniora's cabinet, including all five Shia Ministers, and charged that the Siniora cabinet had thereby become illegitimate and unconstitutional. A few days later, on November 21, assassins gunned down Minister of Industry Pierre Gemayel. A massive pro-Hizballah rally in Beirut on December 1, 2006 began a sit-in located in the square in front of the Prime Minister's office in Beirut which, although numbers have dwindled, continues today. Lebanon's parliament, which was to open on March 20, has not been convened by the Speaker of Parliament since last year. The campaign has been characterized by escalating rhetoric and occasional outbreaks of violence. Terrorist attacks, like the February 13 bus bombing in Ain Alaq near Beirut which killed three people the day before the two-year commemoration of Rafiq Hariri's assassination, have sown fear throughout Lebanon and have led to growing concerns about a return of civil conflict.

The United States has leveraged significant amounts of economic, military, and diplomatic assistance to support the security, freedom, and independence of Lebanon. We have made progress since August, but still have much work to do.

The United States, European allies, and regional partners have rallied behind the Lebanese Government to provide substantial amounts of economic assistance. President Bush pledged an initial \$230 million in support to Lebanon in August, which he followed in February with a request to Congress for approximately \$770 million in new assistance for the Lebanese Government. We have used these pledges to generate additional support. An August Conference hosted by Sweden generated \$940 million in pledges for the relief and reconstruction phase, while a January conference in Paris generated \$7.6 billion aimed at fiscal stabilization and long-term economic reform.

Early reconstruction assistance enabled most of the estimated 980,000 people displaced by last summer's conflict to return to their homes shortly after the cessation of hostilities. However, Lebanon's economy was impacted by the loss of the summer

tourist season, and the continuing political stalemate is further slowing the recovery process. The Hizballah-led protests in downtown Beirut have shut down much of Beirut's busiest commercial district. More and more shops are closing. Reconstruction of roads and schools continues, but many Lebanese citizens have delayed rebuilding destroyed homes because they fear another conflict soon. As time passes, more and more Lebanese, especially young adults, are giving up hope and leaving the country to find security and jobs overseas.

In January, the Lebanese Government presented to donors a comprehensive economic reform plan designed to stabilize the Lebanese economy and promote long term growth. We encouraged the Lebanese Government to do this in partnership with the International Monetary Fund, and they have done so. They reached agreement on April 9 on their first-ever IMF program for Emergency Post-Conflict Assistance. The Lebanese reform program includes difficult reforms including budget cuts, tax increases, and privatization of the telecom sector and other key industries. The proposal also contains structural reforms aimed at increasing accountability and transparency, including: the adoption of a fiscal accountability law; adoption of a new procurement code in line with international standards and proper procedures for public sector recruitment; and the establishment of a "Higher Council for Debt Management" and an integrated debt management unit at the Ministry of Finance to improve coordination, debt reporting and transparency. To encourage implementation of this reform plan, the Administration has proposed to Congress that \$250 million in U.S. assistance for Lebanon be directed to debt relief, and disbursed to Lebanon's creditors as the Lebanese Government meets milestones in its economic reform plan. We are encouraging other donors to do the same.

This funding will be provided in conjunction with \$50 million in USAID project assistance that will strengthen legislative and judicial processes and municipal government operations, to support civil society participation and to improve primary and secondary schools.

In addition to economic support from the U.S. Government, we are leveraging the U.S. private sector with other economic incentives to support Lebanon. American companies like Microsoft, Intel, Cisco, Ghafari, Occidental Petroleum, and Global Impact have created the U.S. Lebanon Partnership Fund to raise awareness and funds to rebuild the country and to create public-private partnerships designed to help the people of Lebanon find the path to long-term stability and economic growth. The Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) has partnered with Citigroup and local banks to provide a \$120 million loan facility that will mobilize up to \$160 million in private capital for home reconstruction, mortgage financing, and small and medium-sized enterprises in Lebanon.

The Lebanese Armed Forces have deployed to the south of Lebanon for the first time in almost thirty years. New UNIFIL forces, more heavily armed and numerous and with an expanded and robust mandate, are accompanying them. First under French command and now under the command of the Italians, UNIFIL now has 13,000 military personnel from 30 Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) serving in the south and in a maritime task force.

Overall, this deployment has gone relatively well. UNIFIL has coordinated meetings between the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israeli Defense Forces, which has overall led to better cooperation along the Blue Line. While Hizballah no longer maintains an overt armed presence in southern Lebanon, we are not convinced that the area has been completely cleared of weapons and fighters, and are urging the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL to take a more active role in confronting Hizballah operatives and seeking out weapons caches.

UNSCR 1701 imposes a legally binding obligation on all states to prevent the sale or supply in Lebanon of arms and related materiel and related technical training without the authorization of the Lebanese Government or UNIFIL. We have called on all UN member states to act aggressively in enforcing this embargo, ensuring that their territory and airspace are not used to undercut it. The Lebanese Government has deployed thousands of troops to its border with Syria to prevent illegal weapons smuggling, but the border presents difficult terrain to monitor. Germany has begun a pilot program to provide equipment and training at official border crossings. These steps, while notable, are not sufficient.

The border between Lebanon and Syria remains highly porous; in his most recent report to the Security Council on the status of implementation of UNSCR 1701, Secretary General Ban reported that Israel had provided to the UN detailed intelligence which indicate "serious breaches of the arms embargo across the Lebanese-Syrian border."

Ultimately, the disarmament of Hizballah and any other militias within Lebanon, as called for in UNSCR 1559, 1680, and 1701 will continue to be essential to Leb-

anon's sovereignty and to a lasting peace. Disarmament of Hizballah will also continue to pose a significant challenge.

While we continue to encourage the LAF and UNIFIL to take a more assertive role in stopping smuggling, the U.S. is channeling security assistance to ensure the LAF has the equipment and training it needs to do the job. In the aftermath of the summer war, we increased our security assistance to \$40M for FY06 from just under \$1M for FY05 to address, in coordination with other donors, the LAF's key equipment and training requirements. U.S. security assistance has already purchased spare parts for vehicles and helicopters to help repair and modernize existing LAF equipment, new vehicles including 20 Humvees to help the LAF patrol the south and the border, small arms and ammunition to augment the LAF's dangerously low stocks, and training for LAF officers. President Bush has requested \$220M in FY07 supplemental funds to address remaining equipment and training shortfalls resulting from years of Syrian occupation, help the LAF sustain its robust deployment to the South Lebanon as called for by UNSCR 1701, and improve LAF border security capabilities. The President has also requested \$60M for Lebanon's Internal Security Forces (ISF) to fund a comprehensive train and equip program that will allow these forces to take over police functions traditionally carried out by the LAF. Our assistance to the ISF has already borne fruit, with FBI-trained ISF units investigating the February 13 Ain Alaq bus bombings, leading to the quick arrest of five suspects.

In addition to military assistance, we are working with our international partners bilaterally and through the United Nations to maintain pressure on Syria and Iran to abide by the arms embargo. We are also working to identify other diplomatic tools in this effort which could include additional bilateral border assistance and border monitoring and assessment missions.

Moving forward, we must maintain our emphasis on economic and security assistance to Lebanon, targeting it in a way that supports the Government of Lebanon as it works to fulfill its responsibilities under UNSCR 1701.

Clearly, an important component of our strategy in Lebanon will be to maintain pressure on Syria and Iran to cease any weapons shipments and destabilizing tactics. To achieve this, we continue to implement a policy of behavior change through diplomatic isolation and pressure. In the case of Iran, UNSCR 1747, which forbids the export of weapons from Iran, is a good start. In the case of Syria, Syria is clearly eager to court the international community. Nonetheless, we continue to limit diplomatic engagement until the Syrian Government demonstrates a real willingness to end its destabilizing behavior in the region. Specifically, the United States still awaits a signal that the Syrians are ready to renounce their sponsorship of terrorism, to do more to end the flow of foreign fighters into Iraq, expel the leadership of Palestinian terrorist groups, and to improve its domestic civil society record. U.S. sanctions have been imposed on Syria due to their policies.

A United Nations independent investigation into the assassination of PM Hariri and others continues under the leadership of Belgian prosecutor Serge Brammertz. To build cases for future prosecutions, Brammertz is commendably discrete about the results of the investigation. Brammertz has reported to the Security Council, however, that he is making good progress and is nearing the end of the investigation.

The Assad regime, Hizballah, and pro-Syrian elements within Lebanon have been resisting the establishment of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon that will try those implicated in the assassinations of PM Hariri and other Lebanese patriots. Pro-Syrian ministers within the Lebanese cabinet resigned the day the Cabinet was scheduled to give its approval of the agreement between the Lebanon and the UN to establish the Tribunal. Pro-Syrian Lebanese president Emile Lahoud, who has continued to promote Syrian interests well after Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, and Lebanese speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri have taken all possible measures to block approval of the agreement. Hizballah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah has also resisted the establishment of the Tribunal; on Easter Sunday he went so far as to call four suspects being held for their involvement in the crime "political prisoners."

The Security Council approved the process of establishing the Tribunal through an international agreement between the United Nations and Lebanon. The Tribunal is intended to be primarily Lebanese in character, with prosecutions under Lebanese law, but with international elements to provide security for judges and witnesses and to ensure impartiality. These international elements were included in the agreement at the request of the Government of Lebanon and include international, as well as Lebanese, judges and prosecutors and a location outside of Lebanon. Although the majority of the members of the parliament have attested, through petition to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, that they support the establishment of

the Tribunal, Parliamentary Speaker Berri has refused to reconvene the parliament, previously scheduled to formally open on March 20, and allow it to vote on this important matter.

President Bush and Secretary Rice have been clear about the commitment of the United States to the establishment of this Tribunal. While we would prefer to establish the Tribunal through the agreement between the United Nations and the Lebanese Government, if the Lebanese Government is unable to approve the agreement the Council may need to consider other mechanisms for establishing the Tribunal, including under UN Security Council Chapter VII authority. It is clear that the Lebanese people want to see justice done in this case and to deter future assassinations and bombings, yet a minority within Lebanon is blocking the process, and in doing so is paralyzing Lebanon and holding its democracy hostage.

In all of our efforts we continue to work closely with European and regional allies. European states provide the bulk of the force contributions for UNIFIL and have provided significant monetary assistance for the Lebanese Government. France and the United Kingdom remain key allies on the Security Council. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other regional partners have also provided significant financial assistance to Lebanon. We maintain a productive dialogue with the Arab League. Regional leaders Saudi Arabia and Egypt play important roles in mediating the political crisis within Lebanon and the region.

While progress in Iraq and in the Arab-Israeli conflict remain core concerns, our determination to improve the economic and political situation in the broader Middle East remains the only way to create conditions for real change and lasting stability.

We must continue to support moderate Governments like that of Lebanon in their efforts to meet the needs of their people and to encourage genuine freedom to take root. There are few other places where the risks and opportunities are clearer than they are in Lebanon. Our approach must be comprehensive and it must seize opportunities when only dangers seem present.

We are under no illusions, however. Conflict resolution and reform in the region will require a great commitment from the United States, but how we respond will define our relationship with the region for generations to come.

Thank you for your time. I would be pleased to address your questions.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. Mr. Ward.

STATEMENT OF MR. MARK WARD, SENIOR DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR, BUREAU FOR ASIA AND THE NEAR EAST, U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. WARD. Mr. Chairman, other distinguished members of the committee, it is truly a pleasure for me to be here today. And thank you very much for the opportunity to discuss how USAID is serving the broad policy objectives that Secretary Welch has laid out for the United States and Lebanon.

We all agree that the United States has a strong interest in promoting a free, independent, and democratic Lebanon, at peace with Israel and its neighbors. Several of you mentioned in your opening remarks that we were providing lots of money, and you are right. And I would like to share with you some of the specifics about USAID's programs today: How that money is being applied in key areas to benefit the Lebanese people and Government, and how money that we have requested, and is pending in the supplemental, would sustain and grow those benefits.

I happened to be traveling in the region last week, and stopped in Lebanon over the weekend so that I could see firsthand some progress on some of our key reconstruction activities.

But let me say a few words first about, and share some thanks for some of the tremendous efforts that went into the initial relief efforts when the conflict subsided at the end of last summer.

I am proud to say that the United States Government's response to the crisis led the international relief effort, dispatching \$230 million in immediate assistance. The President committed to assisting

in specific areas, based on requirements identified by the Government of Lebanon: Rebuilding key transportation, homes, rehabbing schools, cleaning up a major oil spill, and assisting in the disposal of unexploded ordinance.

USAID was able to launch its part of this program immediately by reprogramming certain existing funds out of our other programs.

From the first days of the conflict, our disaster assistance response team deployed to Lebanon and began coordinating with the Government of Lebanon our own military NGOs and other donors to ensure that aid, the right kinds of aid, were getting to the right people. Through the help of the U.S. military, and particularly the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, we were able to provide emergency health supplies in basic household communities to serve the needs of almost 200,000 people for 3 months.

We provided water, sanitation services, and temporary shelters for more than 600,000 people, and nearly \$10 million in wheat and lentils. We also got cash into people's hands to restart businesses that had been affected by the conflict.

Following the end of the hostilities, and even before the end of the hostilities, we started looking ahead to the longer-term reconstruction challenges. And I want to talk about three things, two of which I saw this past weekend.

The Mudeirej Bridge. And we passed out some pictures, I am sure, if you have got them. This is on slide number five. There is a picture of the damage done.

The Mudeirej Bridge is one of the tallest bridges in the Middle East, and a vital commercial link to the interior from Beirut's port. It has sustained, as you can see in the photographs, considerable damage in the conflict, and is now, of course, closed to traffic.

I first visited the bridge in September, and the damage was extensive, and frankly, the repair work daunting. I was there again on Saturday, and was able to see firsthand progress on the bridge. The construction contract has been awarded, with the help of our own Army Corps of Engineers that has a district office in Cairo.

The most damaged south span that you can see there in the photograph on the left has been knocked down. And the construction contractor is now mobilizing and beginning to put a patch on the north span, which you can see on the photograph on the right, so that traffic can resume on that north side soon.

Construction will last well into next year, but during that time, provide jobs for hundreds of Lebanese workers in the meantime. And motorists crossing that north span will soon see signs thanking the American people for taking on this enormous project.

U.S. reconstruction efforts also include a new program to improve schools throughout the country. We are not talking about building schools; we are talking about basic improvements, such as improving sanitary conditions, classroom conditions, and playgrounds. We estimate that approximately 90,000 students in over 200 schools will benefit.

I visited one of the schools in Mina on Saturday. There is a picture of me with some kids there on slide seven. I am the old guy in the back.

I spent more than an hour visiting with the principal, teachers, and students in all of the classrooms. And it was very instructive. I was very impressed by the students in particular, the great questions that they asked.

I know you join me when I say that teachers are heroes, no matter the country, but especially under conditions such as they work in. The principal of the school, just a regular old civil servant, has taken money out of his own pocket to support repairs to the school. The dedication of the parents, the teachers, and the administration at this school showed me why the Ministry of Education added the school to our improvement program.

The highlight of the day was the thanks that I heard repeatedly from the children. Now, while their parents and teachers might thank us most for fixing the windows, it gets cold there in the winter, or for cleaning up the latrines and the washing-up facilities to improve sanitation, the children were happier about something else: Repaving the playground to take care of the potholes that twist their ankles every time there is recess.

The United States completed its oil-spill cleanup activities between Byblos and Anfeh, including a World Heritage site there at Byblos Port, in record time. You will see a picture, it is in before-and-after pictures in what we handed out this morning. The cleanup itself engaged more than 200 local laborers and fishermen and heavy equipment operators who were trained to perform critical cleanup functions, and they can now serve as experienced responders for future oil spills in Lebanon and the region.

I visited the area a couple of times, and I am pleased to say that the last time I was there, after we had completed the cleanup, we were already beginning to see tourists come back to Byblos Port and spend money and enjoy the restaurants and the other facilities in the area.

Last September, as you know, President Bush asked five distinguished private sector leaders from the United States to launch a nationwide effort to demonstrate private support for Lebanon's reconstruction and development: The CEOs of Cisco, Microsoft, Occidental Petroleum, Ghafair, Inc., and Intel established the Partnership for Lebanon to encourage private and corporate donations. USAID has been working with the fund since the very beginning to identify gaps where their private money can be most useful.

To date, the partnership has made grants to UNICEF, the American Near East Refugee Aid Organization, ANERA, Mercy Corps, and Habitat for Humanity International. These grants, and, just as important, direct investments by the companies themselves, will revive the private sector through job creation, internships, skills training, and IT-based communications projects.

Just yesterday, Craig Barrett, the CEO of Intel, announced a new initiative in a suburb in the south of Beirut, in Berol Barajna, as part of Intel's investment in the future of Lebanon.

When the international community reconvened in Paris in January earlier this year to assess the continuing needs, we announced, as you know, that the President was going to seek almost \$770 million, including \$300 million in supplemental ESF funds, for Lebanon. This includes \$250 million in budget support for the Government of Lebanon to be conditioned on achieving promised economic

reforms, and \$50 million for additional capacity-building projects that USAID will manage; namely, strengthening legislative and judicial processes, municipal government operations, civil society participation, and, as I said before, continuing to improve primary and secondary schools around the country.

And to keep our previous investments on track and to meet our overall objectives in Lebanon, the administration has requested \$42 million for fiscal year 2008 to support the continuation of current programs, as well as some that will start this year with the supplemental funding. Those will be programs under the rubric of economic growth, supporting agri-business, rural tourism, communication technology, water management, and providing advisors to help Lebanon obtain, join WTO.

Continuing our support for the American education institutions in the country, for funds for scholarships. As you may know, we provide funding for more than 1,000 students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds to attend four Lebanese institutions: The American University of Beirut, Lebanese-American University, the American Community School, and International College.

As an indication of our strong commitment to these four institutions, even in the face of the immediate relief and reconstruction needs last summer, we made sure that these institutions received \$6 million for scholarships last fiscal year, even when we had to redirect about 40 percent of our budget to start the reconstruction efforts. They will receive another \$6 million this year.

We will also start programs under the governing justly and democratically category of parliamentary training, municipal reform, and small grants to local NGOs to make civil society in Lebanon more accountable.

Finally, let me say a few words about the challenges that USAID faces today, as we implement a larger foreign assistance program in Lebanon, and what we are trying to do to address these challenges.

The events of the last several months have ratcheted up the security issue that we confront, and our staff, as well as the brave NGO partners that we work with, are operating more often than not in a very non-permissive environment, where access to projects can be very limited. This also means a shortage of in-country staff from Foreign Service Officers with state and USAID to implement and oversee our programs on the ground. And there is very limited Embassy space for any additional permanent or temporary staff.

What we are doing is relying very much on support that we can get from our mission in Cairo, where we had, I guess you could say, the foresight to set up an Office of Middle East Programs a couple of years ago to provide support to smaller programs in the region. We have been getting terrific support in contracting and project design, and in monitoring from our staff in Cairo, that is, of course, very close to Beirut.

But we also have to work within constraints to avoid providing assistance to organizations supporting or tied to Hezbollah, as Congressman Carnahan said. Our programs in Lebanon aim in part to undermine Hezbollah's influence, and we wouldn't be working in the south if we feared working in close proximity with Hezbollah.

But we know the risk that inadvertent and incidental benefits might accrue to Hezbollah organizations, and we have safeguards in place to reduce that risk to a very, very low risk. But we believe that the benefits of working everywhere in Lebanon, including the south, outweigh that very small risk.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for the opportunity, and I very much look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ward follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. MARK WARD, SENIOR DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR, BUREAU FOR ASIA AND THE NEAR EAST, U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Chairman and other distinguished members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to appear before you today. I salute the committee for scheduling a hearing on this critically important issue: *The Political Situation in Lebanon*. I also appreciate this opportunity to talk about how the USAID assistance program is serving broad policy objectives by helping Lebanon become stable and prosperous.

I think we would agree that the United States has a strong interest in promoting a free, independent and democratic Lebanon at peace with Israel and surrounding states. For its part and to help achieve these ends, USAID's primary objective for its Lebanon program is to create a stable situation for good governance to take hold, and to build the economic and institutional capacity of the country to serve and engage its citizens on every level.

Over the years, our development programs, though limited in size, have helped to establish valuable relationships and trust among the Lebanese people. Today, we are drawing on these relationships as we focus our assistance to serve the purposes of humanitarian relief, reconstruction, and longer term development.

In the past, foreign assistance funding for Lebanon have been directed toward activities promoting economic growth, democratic reforms, participatory government, educational opportunities and environmental integrity. These programs form the backbone of the United States Government's ongoing development presence in Lebanon.

Last summer's humanitarian crisis in Lebanon resulting from the Israeli/Hezbollah conflict created a need to refocus U.S. objectives toward the immediate requirements of the relief and reconstruction effort. The U.S. led the international relief initiative by pledging \$230 million in assistance to alleviate the suffering of the Lebanese people. With respect to reconstruction, the President committed to assisting in specific areas of need, based on requirements identified by the Government of Lebanon: 1) rebuilding key transportation infrastructure; 2) rebuilding homes and private infrastructure; 3) rehabilitating schools; 4) cleaning up a major oil spill and restoring coastal livelihoods and 5) assisting in the disposal of unexploded ordnance. USAID immediately launched these efforts, redirecting certain program funds (\$16 million in FY06 funds and eventually \$18 million in FY07 funds) toward the reconstruction initiative.

The international community re-convened to assess the needs and progress of the Government of Lebanon in January of this year. At that gathering, the Government of Lebanon presented a very thorough and well-received reform plan, laying out a commitment to meaningful economic change. In light of that commitment and taking into account what the rest of the donor community was prepared to undertake, the President requested \$300 million in supplemental ESF funds for the Lebanese Government and people. The request includes \$250 million in cash transfer funds to be to be conditioned on achieving promised reform and \$50 million for capacity building development activities, namely strengthening legislative and judicial processes and municipal government operations, promoting civil society participation and improving primary and secondary schools.

As the funds requested for capacity building underscore, through all of this, the U.S. has not lost sight of the importance of its longer term development activities in Lebanon. To keep our previous investments on track and to meet our overall objectives in Lebanon, \$42 million has been requested in the coming 2008 fiscal year budget to support the continuation of current programs, as well as proposed new activities from FY 2007.

The remaining portions of this statement will detail the non-security aspects of USG transformational diplomacy activities in Lebanon, including the continuing development program, our humanitarian relief and reconstruction response, USAID program activities proposed under the 2007 supplemental appropriations request

and, finally, the particular challenges USAID faces in implementing a larger foreign assistance program in Lebanon.

CONTINUING TRANSFORMATIONAL DIPLOMACY ACTIVITIES IN LEBANON

Economic Growth—The United States will continue its focus on the most underserved segments of Lebanon's population. To create jobs, USAID has established a program which focuses on strengthening three sectors of the economy, namely agribusiness and light agro-industry, rural tourism and information and communications technology (ICT).

Activities are designed to promote increased productivity and competitiveness of the agricultural sector in Lebanon. In the area of private sector productivity, USG assistance will support varying enterprises and small and medium enterprises (SME) involved in specialty food production, crafts, and rural tourism. With our support, ICT companies are adopting more efficient processes in their production and business systems and improving their marketing practices.

USAID is continuously working to revitalize rural communities by focusing on workforce development in the tourism sector and developing and strengthening micro-enterprises to generate sustainable source of income for rural micro-entrepreneurs. USAID efforts in trade and investment capacity building will provide private sector firms from rural areas and industries with the necessary training, information, and data to improve their understanding of international market demands and competitive conditions.

USAID's water policy program is working on sensitive policy and financial issues related to public private partnerships, water utility management and tariff pricing at both national and local levels. USAID is providing training and technical assistance to tackle tough issues surrounding the installation of water meters, tariff implementation, bill collection and awareness campaigns for the general public.

Our program also supports Lebanon's efforts for membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO). Through our technical assistance, our implementer, Booz Allen Hamilton has an office and personnel working within the Ministry of Economics and Trade, acting as advisers to the Ministry on WTO related laws and issues.

Investing in People—In the area of education, we are providing funds to educational institutions in Lebanon. The U.S. supports scholarships for more than 1,000 students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds at four well-regarded institutions: American University of Beirut (AUB), Lebanese American University (LAU), American Community School (ACS) and International College (IC). We are working with these institutions to ensure that appropriate safeguards remain in place to comply with legal and policy restrictions against providing assistance to foreign terrorist groups.

USG funding for water supply and sanitation activities demonstrates our commitment to transform the water pollution problems in Lebanon, particularly in the Litani River Basin. Unregulated domestic and industrial waste disposal practices are threatening public health. To address this problem, USAID is improving water management practices and providing for cost effective, environmentally sound and appropriate solutions.

Governing Justly and Democratically—USAID's technical assistance in this area provides training to the Lebanese Parliament to enhance its ability to exercise effective oversight of public administration and to legislate in areas critical to economic and political reform.

Funding through USAID is used to improve the delivery of governmental services to citizens and municipalities, thereby enabling Lebanon's political and governmental systems to adopt credible reforms. USAID's municipal reform program is nationwide and has been credited with rebuilding essential local government foundations. With continued enhancement of administrative and financial capabilities, Lebanon has expanded its tax and revenue base. USAID'S Professional Training Program offers Lebanese professionals training or internship programs based on their need for professional growth and better delivery of services within their organizations.

The USG also supports a Transparency and Accountability Grants (TAG) program providing small grants of up to \$25,000 to local civil society organizations. We lay the groundwork for real reform by empowering these organizations to play a constructive role in advocating for change, thus promoting democracy building and enhancing transparency, accountability, and good governance.

HUMANITARIAN RELIEF AND RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM

Following the end of the cross-border crisis last summer, USG efforts in Lebanon proved instrumental in limiting suffering and instability. From the onset of the con-

flict, the USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) arrived in Lebanon and began coordinating with the Government of Lebanon, the U.S. military, non-governmental organizations and other donors to ensure the right kinds of aid went to the people most in need.

Relying in part on U.S. military logistical capability, the United States was instrumental in the successful evacuation of more than 15,000 American citizens and provided transport to Beirut for emergency relief supplies. At least six CH-53 helicopters assisted in the evacuation of citizens. More than 5,000 U.S. military service members were involved in the evacuation as well. In addition to the USS Nashville, U.S. Navy assets in the area included the guided missile destroyers the USS Gonzalez and the USS Barry, and the USS Mount Whitney, a command and control ship. Through the help of the U.S. military, including the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, USAID was able to provide emergency health supplies and basic household commodities that served the medical needs of almost 200,000 people for three months.

USAID provided water and sanitation services and temporary shelters for more than 610,000 residents. The United States also provided nearly \$10 million in wheat flour, wheat, and lentil commodities.

In partnership with the Government of Lebanon, the United States has committed to several long term reconstruction projects. Work has already started on the Mudeirej Bridge, one of the tallest bridges in the Middle East, with an estimated completion date of April 2008. This large effort will restore one of Lebanon's most vital commercial links—into the interior from Beirut. Once completed this commercial linkage will stimulate trade and economic growth essential for Lebanon's financial reconstruction. It will also provide hundreds of jobs for Lebanese workers in the interim.

Additionally, U.S. reconstruction efforts include a new, long term program to improve schools throughout the country. It is estimated that approximately 90,000 students and 208 schools will benefit from our efforts. These improvements include: repairs to school infrastructure; upgrades to school equipment such as laboratory equipment, supplies and books; awareness programs on health and nutrition, promotion of a better learning environment, and extracurricular activities to enhance the skills and learning experiences of students.

We also should note that the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) will implement in Lebanon various programs that focus on: construction and renovation projects; loan guarantees to local banks; a microfinance program; political violence coverage for a number of Lebanese facilities; and financial investment in various sectors such as manufacturing, construction, and consumer goods. USAID provided OPIC with \$1.2 million to set up a guarantee program for housing repair and loans to businesses.

Finally, the U.S. has successfully completed its oil spill clean-up activities. This reconstruction effort, led by USAID, supported the restoration of beaches from Byblos to Anfeh (Enfe), including World Heritage sites, commercial harbors and public beaches. More than 36,000 bags of oil contaminated waste were collected and more than 220 local laborers, including fisherman, were hired and trained to perform critical clean-up functions. In addition, local businesses were used to provide and operate heavy equipment. Those trained now possess valuable skills and will be able to serve as experienced responders for future oil spill operations in Lebanon and other Mediterranean counties. I am very proud the United States was able to help return this beautiful area to its original condition, readying Byblos for resurgence in tourism and all the economic development this will bring.

Private Sector Support—On September 23, President Bush asked five distinguished private-sector leaders from the United States to launch a nationwide effort to demonstrate private support for Lebanon's reconstruction and development. They are John Chambers from Cisco, Steve Ballmer from Microsoft, Ray Irani from Occidental Petroleum, Youssef Ghafari from Ghafari Incorporated and Craig Barrett from Intel. Three of the five CEOs traveled to Lebanon in late September with Assistant Secretary Dina Powell and me to see the needs first hand, and to meet the Prime Minister, private sector leaders, NGOs and students. Several have been back since.

The CEOs established a fund to encourage private and corporate donations. USAID is working with the fund on how they can best to use those funds. To date, the Partnership for Lebanon has made grants to UNICEF; American Near East Refugee Aid; Mercy Corps; and Habitat for Humanity International.

The Partnership for Lebanon investments will be used to: revive the private sector through job creation and growth, workforce development to provide critical skills training and knowledge transfer of Lebanon's youth, assist with long term IT-base transformation projects for improving communications, and support the establish-

ment of broadband infrastructure to improve communications and e-commerce, benefiting Lebanon's economic growth.

FY 2007 SUPPLEMENTAL REQUEST FOR \$50 MILLION IN PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

New Program Components—Through the FY 2007 supplemental request, we intend to support the GOL's political effort towards reform. Proposed activities include:

- Rule of Law—program will strengthen the justice sector's ability to address key rule of law issues, enhance the system of court administration, and increase the effectiveness of parliament;
- Consensus Building—promotes a competitive and representative political framework, including support to the independent electoral commission and democratic political parties;
- Municipal Capacity and Service Delivery—will improve municipal planning and implementation functions, and transparency of operations;
- Competitive Grant Program—that will provide support to Lebanese non-governmental organizations to strengthen their ability to serve communities and it will offer employment opportunities; and, finally
- LEAD School Improvements—which will upgrade primary and secondary educational facilities. Supplemental appropriations will allow expansion of program nationwide.

Implementation Challenges—The United States faces many challenges managing a larger foreign assistance program in Lebanon. Operating in an often physically dangerous environment where mobility and access are highly limited; shortage of in-country staff; limited embassy space for additional staff; and addressing the risk of providing assistance in areas of known Hizballah presence are the chief constraints. But, through USAID, the U.S. is leveraging existing resources and identifying new resources and creative means to manage a larger reconstruction program in Lebanon. USAID has added additional U.S. and Lebanese staff, as space permits. We engaged the Army Corps of Engineers to supplement construction oversight from the Corps' facilities in this area and Egypt. We used U.S. and Egyptian professionals from USAID's new Office of Middle East Programs in Cairo to support the design of new activities. We also received contracting and legal services from our bilateral Cairo office and organized the Lebanon Task Force in Washington to provide additional technical support from Headquarters. The office of Conflict Response and Stabilization at the State Department provided short term expert help. Finally, because we are on the front lines of providing U.S. assistance, USAID is particularly cognizant of the real risk that inadvertent benefits might accrue to Hizballah or other foreign terrorist organizations even with available safeguards in place. Our involvement aims to undermine Hizballah influence; accordingly, the U.S. believes that the costs of not being involved in Lebanon outweigh the potential negative risks.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for allowing me this opportunity to share information about USAID's role in assisting and promoting Lebanese reform and development. I look forward to your questions.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much. Thanks to both of our witnesses.

Let me begin first with Secretary Welch. You rightfully point out that the Lebanese border is very porous, and they need to do a better job, and we need to keep pressuring them.

The question is, if the United States is the world's greatest military superpower, one of the most highly technology-advanced societies, a great economic power, unified in its political motivation, cannot stop a bunch of Mexicans looking to pick oranges from crossing our border, how realistic are our expectations that the Lebanese, who are militarily weak, politically subservient, economically and technologically disadvantaged, to be able to prevent highly motivated, sophisticated, well-trained terrorists from crossing their border?

Mr. WELCH. Well, I think the short answer to that, Mr. Chairman, is they have an enormous difficulty in doing so. Lebanon has

only two land borders, and its longest one is with Syria. And there are plenty of places where people can cross. So the passage of people would be a particularly difficult problem to control.

And we see some evidence of that going back many years. There are terrorists who do cross that border, and do move into areas of Lebanon, and the Lebanese Government has a great deal of difficulty in stopping that.

First, though, I think it is important to recognize that they realize the responsibility and are making what, in our judgment, is a serious effort. The Lebanese Army has deployed an unprecedented number of personnel to certain parts of the border where it perceives that its controls are weakest, and where the strongest possibility exists to actually come across with shipments of things, not merely people.

Second, there is an effort to improve, modernize the Lebanese border authorities. The German Government has a pilot program underway along the northern sections of this border, and depending on the results of that program, it might be extended.

The United Nations has also taken a look at the situation along the border, and is going to send a further assessment mission to the area to provide some analysis and recommendations. And like the United States, the Secretary General of the United Nations has also appealed to other member states to continue contributions to help.

I think the maritime perimeter is also an important possible vulnerability. There is a very significant UNIFIL naval presence now. In addition, some countries have made contributions to helping with controlling ocean access and the ports. The Germans have also done work in the airport and ports. The United Arab Emirates has provided some coastal patrol craft.

The most important measures so far, however, may be ones that are not actually on the ground. Resolution 1701 is an important resolution. It carries the effect of international law. It was voted unanimously by the Security Council, and it includes an arms embargo.

The recent resolution passed with respect to Iran on its nuclear activities also includes an arms embargo on Iran. And that establishes a bar for behavior by the countries that we think are the largest sources of this problem.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Could I ask a question? That bar?

Mr. WELCH. Sir?

Mr. ACKERMAN. I have a question about the bar that you just referred to, because of U.N. Resolution 1701's prohibition on doing those bad things.

I don't know what bar it poses, you know. Is this like if we take copies of the resolution and post it around the property, like no hunting or something like that, that the terrorists are going to say oops, I better not do that? I don't know how you, you know. I mean, it puts them on notice, but it certainly doesn't bar anything. Terrorists know that what they are doing doesn't meet world approval, because if it did, they wouldn't do it.

Mr. WELCH. Well, in the absence of any regulation, I think we would be worse off. Having these things as part of international law does put a bar, a prohibition on the inflow of weapons into Leb-

anon, except for if the Lebanese Government or UNIFIL ask for them or they are legally provided.

Mr. ACKERMAN. The reports that Hezbollah has been completely rearmed, or maybe even armed better, would you agree with that?

Mr. WELCH. I believe, and we have sufficient evidence to back up this judgment, that Hezbollah has rearmed. Whether they have completely rearmed, I don't know that I could make that judgment or not. Our information may not be that complete in that respect. I have no doubt—

Mr. ACKERMAN. So let us assume it is somewhere between 80 percent and 120 percent. The bar doesn't exist, is my observation. I mean, we are on record and we have to do all those things; you know, that is a given. It is good to post speed limit signs on the highway, but unless you figure out a reasonable way to enforce them and have penalties that are imposed and felt, my question is do we have those.

Mr. WELCH. Well, you are absolutely right. Enforcement is everything. It helps to have the rules, but people have to be caught in the act. Within Lebanon, I think the single largest problem in terms of the militias is Hezbollah, and I have no doubt that they have determined that they want to rearm. The extent of that remains to be seen.

Mr. ACKERMAN. You made reference in your statement that there were no visible signs in south Lebanon of armed Hezbollah. And if we know that they have been resupplied, are they just walking around with concealed weapons? Or are they all someplace else in Lebanon?

Mr. WELCH. It is the judgment of the UNIFIL forces in that area, and of the Lebanese Government, that the overt armed presence isn't in the area of operations of UNIFIL any longer. That is mostly south of Litani.

But simply from watching television of Hezbollahi demonstrations, one can see that there is obviously an armed Hezbollah presence elsewhere in Lebanon. That is a very difficult problem for the government to control, and one that the Hezbollah movement brazenly and openly admits to.

Mr. ACKERMAN. It is like, you know, the good news is you don't have cancer in your left arm any more. The bad news is you have cancer in your right arm. It seems to me that it is not a great deal of bragging rights that Hezbollah, given that they are rearmed, is not visible in south Lebanon if we know that they are somewhere, and rearmed. The problem has moved.

And we are not just dealing with it, we are pushing it around. And they are smart enough to not flaunt it in public these days.

The real question is how do we deal with this long term?

Mr. WELCH. Well, I would answer that in a couple of ways. First, I am not sure I agree, sir, that the problem has merely moved. I think it has been much better controlled. That there is no overt Hezbollahi military presence in the UNIFIL area of operations is a substantial security assurance for Israel, Lebanon's neighbor.

They are north of that area, but the UNIFIL rules of engagement permit operations against anybody who attempts to launch attacks outside of Lebanon from north of its area of operations.

Mr. ACKERMAN. You know, the concern I have—let me just recast it again. It is like 4 years ago we declared, in Iraq, that we had secured Baghdad. And that was because the terrorists were no longer visible. We didn't capture large caches of arms or get rid of the terrorists; they just waited for a different opportunity. And now we have our hands full.

I don't know that we should take solace in the Hezbollah not being seen dancing around south Lebanon, you know, with anti-aircraft missiles. Whatever they have, they got it, and they are still around somewhere.

So the problem is, you know, we have been effective only because they decided that they are smart. And you know, they are just masking their presence and the fact that they have rearmed. I mean, they didn't rearm for no reason. I mean, you know, when you rearm, and you are a terrorist, one would think that you intend to commit acts of terrorism.

Mr. WELCH. I think the impediments to their easy rearmament have grown. These restrictions did not exist before August of last year. It has made it more difficult for them to acquire weapons. That they have rearmed, as I said, I have no doubt. The extent to which that has occurred, I am not certain.

The problem here is in some respects a more fundamental and difficult one. That is, the disarmament of this, the most important remaining armed militia in Lebanon, which, despite many efforts over the years to achieve, so far the Lebanese Government has not been able to do that.

I think the amount of moral and practical support that Lebanon enjoys for that goal has grown substantially. It is, however, extremely difficult for them to do, and I think that is part of the reason that the Hezbollahis have reacted in the way they have, have taken on the government in the manner they have. And that is one of their objectives, is to see that that ability is eroded.

We are marshalling our support for this purpose. Part of that is to help the legitimate security institutions responsible to the government, so that they are in a position to assert themselves.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you. Mr. Pence.

Mr. PENCE. Thank you, Chairman, and thank you to the panel. I particularly wanted to focus my questions on the Assistant Secretary, and I appreciate your testimony today and your extraordinary service to the United States.

It seems to me it is very difficult in a hearing about Lebanon not to focus on the parasitic influence of Syria, and to a lesser extent, but only slightly lesser extent, Iran in that country.

I would argue that much of Lebanon's present troubles can be traced to Syrian occupation that went from 1976, I think, to 2005. Other problems arose from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard's virtual creation of Hezbollah back in 1982, and Syria and Iran clearly have indigenous allies within Lebanon.

And while I say with great respect, the Speaker of the House recently said, and I quote, "The road to peace runs through Damascus," I would argue that Damascus is the largest obstacle to peace in the region. And I would further argue that it is also Damascus that represents the greatest threat to a stable and prosperous and independent government surviving in Lebanon.

I want to focus my questions, though, on some extent your optimism, Secretary Welch, about the U.N. investigation, and to the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri. Apparently another extension means it will take more than 3 years for there to be an official report on this atrocity. I am mindful of the fact that the U.N. investigator, I will try and pronounce, Detlev Mehlis, stated in his initial report of the Hariri assassination, and I quote, "It would be difficult to envisage a scenario whereby such a complex assassination plot could have been carried out without their knowledge." And by that, he was referring to Syrian and Lebanese intelligence services.

I would like to ask very directly, Mr. Secretary, do you agree with that, that finding and that suggestion?

Number two, I would be very curious about your thought, Mr. Secretary, it strikes me, you know, from a 30,000-foot view, and I am not in it up to the knuckles the way you are. But can you explain how street protests in 2005 against Syria have now become street protests in favor of Syria? And despite the aggression against Israel last year, what is driving that? Is that evidence of that indigenous influence? Or has there been a fundamental sea change on the ground among the populace in Lebanon, which I am deeply skeptical about?

And lastly, given the malignant presence of Syria and Iran in Lebanon, I would just leave you with a third question. And that would be, can you see a strong enough independent political class emerging from the present gridlock in Lebanon? In my truncated opening remarks, I referred to the Cedars of Lebanon. My family almost left my Marine Corps brother at that Marine Corps barracks in 1983. He redeployed out of that building 1 week before it was detonated. We have a long and deep understanding in our family about the cost of violence, and, in my judgment, the centrality of success in Lebanon to success in the wider Middle East.

But I am believing in my heart that the Cedars of Lebanon still exist in the hearts of their people. But I would really like you to speak with regard to the assassination and with regard to the changing protests, and with regard to the nature of the government. Can Lebanon really overcome this parasitic, indigenous influence from Damascus and Tehran?

Mr. WELCH. Thank you, Mr. Pence. Those are some very thoughtful questions, sir. I didn't know that you had family members at the barracks there at the airport.

Today, by the way, sir, is the anniversary of the destruction of our Embassy in 1983. I was remarking to my colleagues on the way over here that that morning I was woken up early; I was the Lebanon desk officer that day. That is how long I have been with this issue.

And I think part of the answer to your first question, in terms of the investigation, is that a sad part of the history of the Lebanese Civil War has been that pitifully few of the crimes committed by Lebanese against each other or others against Lebanese have been solved. I think that speaks to the extraordinary effort the international community has been willing to devote to the investigation and potential prosecution of these crimes.

For many people in the region, even in an area that is used to unfortunately a lot of violence and terror, the murder of former

Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri is one of the most respected public figures in the Arab world, or internationally—a man known for his, not only his political accomplishments, but his philanthropy—was a horrific, over-the-top event.

And it hasn't subsided. There have been attacks on other innocent Lebanese: Journalists, politicians, a former President of Lebanon has lost a brother and a son.

I think that notwithstanding the difficulty of finding out who did these things, it is a good thing that the international community has stepped up and said we are going to help Lebanon in this.

Mr. Pence, I honestly don't know about the investigation. And I think that is a good thing that I don't know. Because this is an independent, impartial international investigation. The United States has made some contribution—forensic techniques and expertise—but we don't know. And that is the way it should be.

We want to see justice done, and that investigation should lead to wherever it is going to lead. I won't deny I have my suspicions, but that is not relevant to Mr. Mehlis's or Mr. Brammertz's work.

You asked if I shared the view that this was a complex plot and crime. Undoubtedly that is the case. The information briefed to the Security Council membership, which of course includes the United States, on this investigation substantiates that it was a very sophisticated act of terrorism. And one would surmise from that that a considerable amount of expertise and capability would lie behind it.

We, as I said, want to see justice done, and we are prepared to explore extraordinary further measures to see that accomplished. The best way for this to proceed is in accordance with the laws and processes in Lebanon. If they need further help with that, we will have to look at it.

The U.N. has sent its legal counsel just in the last days to Lebanon, and he is going to explore this matter of establishing the tribunal further. We will hear back from him when he returns.

You asked about protests against the government, and does this represent a sea change. And the other side has suddenly become ascendant, where, in the spring of 2005, we saw the complete opposite.

I think that we should draw a distinction between the outrage of the majority—and I mean the overwhelming majority of Lebanese—against crime, violence, and terror in their country, and the political actions of a determined few to reshape how we look at this problem.

I am sure that among those who demonstrate against the government, there are probably some well-meaning Lebanese who have political grievances that are Lebanese in character. That is not the issue here.

The issue is can we enable the people who want to think in a forward-looking way about the future of their nation; the political class that you asked about, to do what is right for their nation.

We are convinced that there are people, led by the Prime Minister of Lebanon, backed by his majority in Parliament, who do want to see that future for Lebanon. Who want to put the Civil War behind them. Who are working energetically to use the inter-

national assistance that has been offered to shape their country's future.

And they have friends here in the United States, including in this Congress. And that I think is a really powerful signal of our determination that the region, and especially Lebanese, should see that the old way isn't going to work any more, it is not going to win.

I will not minimize the challenges. And I know a little bit about Syria, having served there. I know that they have a lot to lose here, and it is the perception in Damascus that they are losing that motivates them to even strike back harder. But I don't think they can succeed.

Mr. PENCE. Thank you. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Ms. Jackson Lee.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Chairman, thank you for this very timely hearing, and as well to the ranking member for this committee continuing to address these current and vital issues. And good morning to the witnesses, and thank you very much for your commentary.

I have somewhat of a personal reflection on this recent war that occurred between Lebanon and Israel. I had about 10 or 11 young people in Haifa sent from the 18th Congressional District who are participants in the Mickey Leland Kibbutz Program, predecessor to this office, the Congressman who lost his life in Ethiopia. We have been managing and supporting and funding this program for almost 20 years.

The interesting thing is that those young people became probably more committed to the families that they were staying with in Haifa, as opposed to their own security, and wanted to remain. So there was quite a bit of dialogue and conversation in the midst of what we understand to be a very, very tough war situation.

I say that to say that we have a lot of common needs in that area, a lot of connectedness that needs to be addressed. And so I have a series of questions about how we confront our dilemma.

First, I want it to be very clear that I think it is imperative for Israeli soldiers to be returned to their families, or to be given the knowledge of the whereabouts and the conditions of these soldiers. A sovereign nation has that right. And one of my questions will be, Mr. Secretary, to ask where we are specifically—and if I have missed an answer that you have given—in aiding Israel in that instance.

I then go on to looking at this map that poses, I think, very tough challenges, as I look at it, with a very huge Syrian border, and then of course the Israeli border in the Golan Heights.

I believe that we have enormous challenges, meaning the world, in bordering the Syrian border between Lebanon, which is an extension of the war that occurred between Israel and Lebanon, based upon the need of finding their countrymen.

Why would, or is, the administration opposed to a political resolution and test, if you will, than have the ability to test, if you will, the will of President Assad on any kind of resolution that might be occurring?

Third question: Is there some continued reason to ignore one recent codel, partly out of this committee, that indicated that there

may be a light at the end of the tunnel for discussions with Syria? Also some notations being made by a Syrian businessperson who was in Israel and, I understand, spoke to the Knesset, or a committee thereof, raising the same question with some, how many 13,000 U.N. troops in the southern border, with more troops than ever before that Lebanon has sent, making the whole issue somewhat questionable.

Can we not look to—certainly, not with our guard down, but with our guard up, reasonable but forceful non-bending, non-yielding negotiations—that is too sophisticated a word—conversations. Because I assume negotiations means you have someone who is willing. But conversations to get us to a point where we can begin to unfold the dilemma in that region.

I will stop with those questions, and follow up with you. Mr. Secretary.

Mr. WELCH. Thank you, ma'am. This matter of the captured Israeli soldiers is really a very serious and depressing problem. Israel allows visitation rights by the ICRC to people who are identified as Lebanese that are in Israeli captivity. There is no equivalent access afforded to these Israeli soldiers, who are held, we believe, by Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The United Nations has appointed a facilitator to look at this problem. He is working with the Secretary General directly. And despite their best efforts, they have been unable to obtain a sign of life of these soldiers, which of course the families of those affected desperately want.

I have talked to Prime Minister Siniora personally about this, going back to last summer, Madame Congresswoman. And I know his personal intentions are good, and he would also like to be able to deliver a sign of their welfare. But he has not been able to do that. He lacks the capacity.

The Secretary General reported very recently to the United Nations that despite good efforts on their part, there were still, I think, I am not sure if I have got his words exactly right, but immoderate demands being presented by those holding the soldiers.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Do you have a sense that they are still alive?

Mr. WELCH. I honestly do not know, Madame Congresswoman. I believe the Secretary General and others interested in this issue are operating on the basis that they are, but that is a presumption, and not necessarily a fact.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. However we can help, I hope we can. And I guess I jump then to the next series of my questions about Syria.

Mr. WELCH. If I might just conclude with one final observation on this case, though.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Yes.

Mr. WELCH. In terms of the view of the United States. We think, as a humanitarian matter, this ought to be dealt with forthrightly and quickly.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Right.

Mr. WELCH. And we made that appeal regularly. I am not sure that the Hezbollahis listen to us, but we will nonetheless continue to state that because we think that is the right position.

Secretary Rice met with the families of captured Israeli soldiers during her last trip out there, as well.

I have heard repeated affirmations by the government in Damascus that they are serious about doing something with respect to trying to reach peace with Israel, and that they are not interfering in Lebanon; that they are not the source of problems in Iraq, and that, you know, it is legitimate for Palestinians to struggle for their cause no matter what the means.

It is the conviction of this administration that those words alone are not enough when measured against what we see as Syrian actions. I don't, almost all Lebanese are convinced to their core that Syria interferes in their country. We know from considerable information that the single largest vulnerability along Iraq's borders for the entry of foreign fighters is through Syria.

There are Palestinian terrorist groups headquartered in Damascus that appear on television there. And there is no denying that. Syrians, rather than deny it, exculpate it.

And finally, with respect to their pronounced willingness to have negotiations with Israel, I think if the Israeli Government had any conviction that Syria was serious about that, it would, in its own national interest, take that up. I think they are equally as skeptical as we are.

I realize that there are people with good intentions from time to time who will make an effort to test these judgments and involve themselves in this pursuit. And they probably will learn the same lessons that we have so far.

As far as I understand, this Syrian-American businessman that you mentioned who has been in touch with some retired Israeli officials and has made some trips to Damascus has got nothing new in this respect.

Thank you, ma'am.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Let me just finish, Mr. Chairman, to say, Mr. Secretary, this is a, diplomacy can be both exhilarating and frustrating. We thank those of you who are engaged in it. You know, we know that there are pending elections; there may be the election of someone who has Shi'ite and Christian support. Who knows if that will be better or not better?

Frankly, I believe that we should always strike when the iron is hot. And I would simply say that is what diplomacy is about: Getting your hopes up and getting them dashed, but it is continuing in the fight. And of course, sometimes it is with your nose held. We want Hezbollah to do more than stand by. And I think that when you have either delegations or individuals who say there is a light at the end of the tunnel, it behooves us, without compromising our foreign policy and our principles, to try to push the envelope, and not to abandon our allies, such as Israel.

I disagree that we should concede that our hopes have been dashed. Let us be aggressive. Let us ask Damascus again to separate itself from Hezbollah, to intervene with what Hezbollah is doing, the violence, the actions, and the retaining of the soldiers. Let us keep the fight going. And then, as well, challenge them on the representations they have made that they are interested in some form of discussions around peace.

I know that some people are choking on that. But I frankly believe that that is what diplomacy is. It has its wins, and it has its losses. But it should never have a give-out or a give-in.

And I yield back my time.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I thank the gentlelady. Let the Chair observe that I believe that the gentlelady intended to say the war between, the war that took place mostly in Lebanon between Israel and the Hezbollah, rather than between Israel and Lebanon.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I accept that clarification, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I know that was your intent.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. It clearly was. Thank you so very much. I know the people of Lebanon were truly innocent in this. Thank you.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Let me, if I may, before going to Mr. Fortenberry, who will be next, ask a question based on this exchange a little more directly.

Do you think it is helpful or unhelpful if members of this committee or Members of Congress go to Syria to have meetings with high-level officials in the interest of pursuing United States policy?

Mr. WELCH. Mr. Ackerman, I trust in the judgment of the membership of this committee, and of Congress. And I would point out that it is not my judgment alone that matters in this; it is the judgment of all those who are watching.

Sometimes an effort to, however serious and well intentioned it might be, to ask questions and to raise issues, is misperceived. And particularly when we are dealing with a skilled and devious adversary who has a long record of deception about their real actions.

I am a big believer in talking, asking questions. And as a diplomat, I believe in diplomacy. But I also know when I have got an answer. And I am sorry to say that the answers that we have gotten to the questions that we have asked are not only insufficient to convince us that Syria is serious about addressing these problems, but also pose risks to Palestinians, to Lebanese, to Iraqis, and yes, to Americans.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I think you said you answer to a higher authority. [Laughter.]

I appreciate the fullness of your answer, as far as it was able to go. And I want to assure you that despite the fact that there is a sophisticated, devious, bad-intended leadership in Damascus, that the Members of Congress, as you know and pointed out, are in most instances rather sophisticated and serious themselves. Sometimes national leaders on our side misspeak. That doesn't mean anything in the long run.

But certainly members of this committee, this gentleman from the East Coast and the gentleman down at the other end from the West Coast, each separately met both with President Assad and his father separately at other occasions, President Assad, in the advancement of our foreign policy, regardless of party position or political attitude, in an attempt to move the process forward. And I am glad that you believe in discussions and diplomacy, and we do, too.

Mr. Fortenberry.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, gentlemen, for appearing today.

Would you assess, please, the relative strength and/or fragility of Prime Minister Siniora's government? And then play out a scenario based upon your answer?

Mr. WELCH. I have worked a considerable amount with Prime Minister Siniora. I believe that many members of this committee know him and know members of his government. Many are acquainted with politicians who support him as part of his parliamentary majority.

I believe Prime Minister Siniora is a courageous and serious leader. I believe he is a Lebanese patriot, and a believer in the future of his country. In the face of incredible odds and enormous pressure, he has not given in.

I think he does that not only because he believes himself in his nation's cause and in the welfare of his people, but also because he is confident he has people behind him. And I think he has the majority of the Lebanese people behind him.

I will admit that from time to time we have our differences with Prime Minister Siniora. That is a good thing, because that is normal in any mature and serious relationship.

I do not think that the opposition is succeeding in their tactic of isolating and reducing the credibility and leadership of this Government of Lebanon. I think they have withstood it, under the circumstances, enormously well.

You have got a problem where several of the institutions don't function. The presidency is essentially illegitimate, having been extended by an extraordinary and irresponsible act. The Parliament can't meet as it normally does because of disagreements of one party with it. Communities are divided.

Notwithstanding that, the Lebanese Government, under the Prime Minister's leadership, has mustered itself, continues to do the best it can in representing the interests of its people. After a ruling in summer of last year because of a war they didn't start, there are some modest signs of positive economic change now in Lebanon. Their delegation to the World Bank IMF meetings composed of serious technocrats, responsible people, coming here with a very serious economic reform program the government is determined to move through with our support and the support of others in the international community.

And finally, I would say that, you know, the United States is not alone in supporting this government and the majority of the Lebanese behind them. International support is very considerable for Lebanon. And I think the adversaries of stability in that country understand that, and understand how isolated and petty that they look.

Thank you, sir.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Carnahan.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to address my remarks to Secretary Welch. My question is, I wanted to, I guess, first describe some things that I observed looking at this from a broader picture. And that is that Lebanon has this incredible religious diversity, with I understand 17 different recognized religions. And they have, as Ranking Member Pence pointed out, a substantial Christian population, about 40 percent of the country.

We have a large Lebanese-American community in the United States, including my home area in St. Louis. And the majority of Arab-Americans here are of Lebanese origin.

And I guess my question is twofold, looking at those statistics. And this is something that my Lebanese-American constituents back home have encouraged me to pursue.

And first, how can we better utilize the experience and insight of that substantial Lebanese Christian community in Lebanon to advance our interests in Lebanon and the broader Middle East? And secondly, how can we better utilize that substantial Arab-American community here at home to advance our interests in the Middle East?

Mr. WELCH. Thank you, Mr. Carnahan. Lebanon is a wonderful, complex place, one of the Middle East's most diverse societies, as you point out. It is exciting because of that, and has in the past sent both good and bad messages as a result of that diversity.

I think Lebanese want to live with each other, and they would like to put their most recent and difficult past behind them. Regrettably, not everybody in Lebanon feels that way. There are significant political differences.

Americans of Lebanese origin are really a very important constituency, sir. As you point out, they are deeply committed to their connection to their homeland, America, and to Lebanon. They are in constant touch with us, one of the most active constituencies with which we work on a daily basis, and many of them go back and forth to Lebanon all the time, as you know.

I think they want to see their country prosper, too. I think we see evidence of that in any number of ways.

For example, Mr. Ward mentioned that American corporations have embarked on an unprecedented effort to help the private sector in Lebanon. Two of the CEOs who are involved are Americans of Lebanese origin. The Christian community in Lebanon is divided, sir. And unfortunately, one politically significant part is allied with Hezbollah.

And notwithstanding the interests of most Lebanese who are Christian in ensuring their representation in a responsible way in government, this gentleman has regrettably pursued his own ambitions ahead of the country's welfare, and ahead of the welfare of his own community.

I think Arab-Americans generally are supportive of this administration's policies on Lebanon. There are many Americans of Lebanese origin who are not Christian. From some other constituencies, including I think some represented in this committee, there are many Lebanese-Americans of Sh'ia faith. But I think they believe in their country, too. And they see our actions in support of a unified, free, democratic Lebanon as being in the interest of all Lebanese, and not directed in support of one community against another, but instead to use that diversity that can make Lebanese proud for the purposes of their future. Thank you.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Costa, then Mr. Issa.

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Secretary, I was reading your statement. And on your closing line you said we are under no illusions, and certainly your comments thus far reflected that.

The conflict resolution and reform in the region will require great commitment from the United States. I would submit that, if you look at the history going back to the 1980s, we have continued to

make great commitment, although it may seem sometimes in starts and stops. I mean, there may, one might argue there has been a level of inconsistency over that time period.

But how we will respond, as you say in closing, will define our relationship within the region for generations to come, I don't think anyone disagrees with your close.

In listening to you and reading your statement, and listening to the questions that have been asked, I am reminded of a book that I think encapsulates the situation in Lebanon quite well that Friedman wrote, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*. And I think of how the description of the 1980s took place when that level of conflict was there, and you saw all the various parts that we have talked about here this morning.

And I guess I am wondering, from your perspective, how much has changed in the last 20 years to give us a quantitative perspective, and what lessons we have learned from, in your perspective, what has changed. And therefore, what is, in your opinion, as you say this great commitment from the United States, what is the key to unlocking the door, given the fragileness of the various groups within Lebanon today? Notwithstanding the comments you have made about the majority of Lebanese, and the base of support that they have here in this country, which I concur with.

I mean, we want to—I remember a couple months ago with the President talking about his conversation with the head of the German Government, talking about her great concern about Lebanon. Do you want to give us some perspective?

Mr. WELCH. Thank you, Mr. Costa. Earlier I mentioned that I started working on Lebanon in 1982.

Mr. COSTA. And that is why I thought it would be good to ask you the question.

Mr. WELCH. I would say that there are two really dramatic differences today, as opposed to, let us say, 20 years ago.

First, what was once perceived as a possibly stabilizing influence, Syria's presence in Lebanon has now been discarded, both by Lebanese, but also by the region and internationally.

It took a heinous act to make that graphically clear. But when it happened, the will of Lebanese was also graphically clear. Lebanese wanted Syria out of their country, and didn't want them to come back. That is a big and important change. And I think, notwithstanding the misplaced ambitions of some in Damascus, it is going to be impossible for them to restore that situation.

Number two. The people of Lebanon have been able to vote once now in a truly free election for Parliament. They have the possibility of a national, of a vote for President coming up in the fall. That Lebanon is able to have elections that are free and open, visible to their people, to the international community, with observers, is a really important change, as well. Proper legitimacy should govern the future of Lebanon, not the will of a few.

You ask what is key to American commitment, what would unlock, or what would help in this situation. Obviously, we have an unprecedented political and practical commitment. The levels of assistance we have sought from Congress are extraordinary, and many multiples what was given before.

The weakness in Lebanon has been in the authority of the central government. And to the extent we are able to unlock that problem and contribute in a manner that helps this government manage the affairs of the nation responsibly with institutions that are legitimate, that reflect the will of all Lebanese, not just a few Lebanese, with security in the hands of the government, and only the government; with economic progress devoted to everybody. Those are the kinds of things that will help to unlock the potential again in Lebanese.

Mr. COSTA. Well, the economic progress, I mean, when you look at the history of the country and the citizens, I mean, I think there is an incredible potential there. Historically, it has always been there. It has been the banking center, it has had the Middle East, it has had, you know, it has always played a—I mean, there is a very I think talented people.

But you hit upon a point earlier, and that is the security force. I mean, unfortunately, the security force, going back 20 years, has been protected by various groups, militia groups. I mean, one could almost—these are my words—liken it to kind of the Sopranos. And what do you, what facts do you believe that that security can be centralized and legitimized in a way that brings the confidence of the citizens that they are being protected by their central government?

Mr. WELCH. Well, first they need the capability, and that means support from outside, and the will to use it. I think they have shown new courage, and been willing to act in these deployments into the south of Lebanon, in protecting the institutions of the state during the recent civil disturbances.

But it is going to, they need help from the outside, too. The single biggest obstacle——

Mr. COSTA. Are we providing it?

Mr. WELCH. Yes, sir, we have been. And we hope Congress agrees to our supplemental package for Lebanon to provide a considerable amount more.

The biggest single problem, sir, is the continued presence of the Hezbollah militia, despite intra-Lebanese agreements, Arab League agreements, and Security Council Resolutions that they should be disarmed. The Lebanese have to resolve that politically. There is a great deal of pressure internally in Lebanon, and from outside, for them to do so. And I think the Hezbollahis feel that pressure, and that is why they are reacting as stubbornly as they are.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Issa.

Mr. ISSA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for allowing me to sit on the dais here today, even though I am not a member of the subcommittee.

Mr. Secretary, it is good to see you again. Mr. Ward, thank you for the work you are doing.

First of all, I would like to thank both of you for the personal risk you take by going in and working in this region. Mr. Ward, obviously going into the south is always with some personal risk, and I appreciate that you do that, and do that in good times and bad. No good times recently.

David, I haven't had a chance to thank you for the work you did in making 1701 a reality. I saw you going in and out during, you know, under terrible circumstances, during a time in which you had to negotiate every nuance of the settlement that occurred, sort of in a three-way position between the United Nations, Israel, and obviously Prime Minister Siniora. Your ability to do that, your ability to negotiate the release of Lebanese military people taken hostage, oddly enough as a sideline to the war, was crucial to not having a loss of life that could have permanently damaged the relationship between the governments and the people that have to work.

I have got a couple of questions that will maybe touch areas that weren't touched earlier. I would like to challenge our level of support for a moment.

Mr. Ward, by all that is holy, \$1 billion, isn't that just a fraction of the damage done to the Lebanese economy outside of the Hezbollah-occupied south in those 34 days of war? Isn't it \$5 billion, \$7 billion, \$8 billion that the economy was affected, by any stretch of the imagination?

Mr. WARD. You are right, Congressman, and that is why we were so pleased with the results in Paris, that the pledges I think totaled something like \$7 billion.

Mr. ISSA. And isn't it true that pledges are delivered usually even slower than Congressional authorization? And that so far some of the biggest chunks of money that have been delivered have been the amount that you reallocated from other areas?

Mr. WARD. Pledges are always a challenge, particularly after a manmade or a natural disaster. I was there this past weekend. We are beginning to see signs that not only our programs are taking off, but programs of support from some of the Gulf States are also coming through. We are very pleased to see that, particularly given the history of Gulf State involvement and pledges in incidents like this.

Mr. ISSA. Are you primarily talking about Qatar and Saudi Arabia's Adopt-a-Community programs? Or are there others that are notable?

Mr. WARD. The Emirates, as well.

Mr. ISSA. And they are doing a lot of the demining support, aren't they?

Mr. WARD. That is correct.

Mr. ISSA. I would like to move to the mines particularly, or in this case the cluster bombs. During the 34 days of hostility, in the last 4 days, apparently over 4 million cluster bombs, or BLUs, were dropped. My understanding is there was approximately a 25-percent failure rate by those.

Mr. Secretary, do you have, or have you asked for, and can you get, for the people cleaning up the cluster bombs, the details of exactly where Israel dropped those 4 million cluster bomb units?

While you are looking for that, I have been able to see approximate maps of where they have been found. But my understanding is that, one, they have not been supplied; two, that they were U.S.-made munitions; three, that the 25-percent failure rate is a United States problem, mostly because these things were produced before

you took that Beirut desk in 1982. And in fact, are 1970s munitions that are very, very old.

Mr. WELCH. This is a really serious problem, Congressman. I was looking here to see what the U.N. report had in it with respect to this issue, because the U.N. has the lead in trying to obtain a detailed understanding of where unexpended ordinance is.

I see from the Secretary General's report that Israel has not yet provided detailed information on its utilization of certain weapons during the conflict. And that he repeats his request for that information.

We have done likewise an independent plea. It is important not only in the United States-Israel context in terms of the understandings we have with Israel about the supply of certain military equipment, but also, I think, as in terms of the safety of people and Lebanese Army personnel and UNIFIL personnel in the area.

Mr. ISSA. And our aid workers in the south.

Mr. WELCH. And even potentially, yes, our employees. With respect to United States-provided munitions, we take the understandings that we have with the Israeli Government very seriously, and believe that our equipment should be used in accordance with our laws and regulations. We briefed committee staff, including this committee, sir, on this issue, as recently as late January.

We have reported to Congress, pursuant to the laws. We are still awaiting further information from the Government of Israel. And as we obtain that, we shall continue our briefing of Congress.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Secretary, the short on that is the weapons were not used consistent with our agreement with Israel, isn't it? Isn't that the Reader's Digest version of that answer?

Mr. WELCH. We have provided a report in accordance with our law, which is a classified report, sir. Setting the answer to that aside for a moment—

Mr. ISSA. I understand.

Mr. WELCH. As I said, this is a dangerous and difficult problem. So quite apart from the bureaucracies of this exercise, we have to do something about it on the ground. And we have put a fair amount of assistance already into cleaning up unexploded ordinance. I think the amounts are about \$10 million so far. It was a very considerable amount of ordinance used last summer, but also from before.

And as UNIFIL and the Lebanese Army conduct its operations, they are even tripping over more, including some that was not used by Israel, to the best of our knowledge.

A forgotten story in this, too, is that Hezbollah used crude cluster munitions against Israel, also, leading to very considerable damage, and in one instance very considerable loss of life.

Mr. ISSA. Thank you. A couple quick more. If we were to evaluate the damage to infrastructure—and this is for Mr. Ward—that was outside of any conceivable operating area of Hezbollah—in other words, Christian communities in the north, in the central, the various border crossings, particularly the bridges, my understanding is over 100 bridges—I understand you have an estimate of the total damage to this non-military infrastructure. Or one would say everything is a military target, but by the normal definition, non-military.

What would you say those costs are related to transportation infrastructure, and then obviously the deliberate attack on various fuel depots that led to oil spills? How do you quantify those in dollars for this committee?

Mr. WARD. The Government of Lebanon has done surveys, and those, in part, influenced and led to the pledges in Paris. I don't have the number at hand. My recollection is that it is in the neighborhood of \$10 billion in overall damage. And, you rightly point out, bridges are the most obvious site.

I will tell you from my visit this last weekend that we had to cross two bridges to get to the bridge that we are rebuilding. They are a lot smaller. But the good news is that one with support from Lebanon's own resources, and one with support from a private bank, Byblos Bank, are nearly complete.

Mr. ISSA. Excellent. And in closing, I want to move to the military element, because I think this committee, because we are not the Armed Services Committee and we don't necessarily look at things in the detail they do. Is it fair to say, Mr. Secretary, that at the start of the war, the vast majority of what the Lebanese military were using were Vietnam surplus 1970s products? 113 armored personnel carriers left over from that period, 12 Hueys of the 1970s. And that there had been, for all practical purposes, no additional new military support in more than 20 years. And as such, we were dealing with a military of the least capability that one could describe, particularly on an offensive basis, no capability. Is that sort of a fair summary of the Lebanese military that we found at the beginning of this ramp-up?

Mr. WELCH. Yes, that is a fair summary, sir.

Mr. ISSA. So when we look at \$220 million of defensive, almost police-type military support, that is most of it in the supplemental, we are really talking about a fraction of the capability that let us say 8,000 U.S. military would normally have.

In other words, if you take a U.S. Army division, normally they would have a lot more than \$200 million worth of equipment to go in and do what they do. And I am asking the question just so that hopefully all of us make the record clear that we are not talking about making the Lebanese Army a world-class, or even a regional-class, military. We are just talking about getting them to where their stuff can be moving, rather than stationary, as its general way of doing business.

Mr. WELCH. Well, essentially that is right. And I am glad you pointed out the element of what we would like to see as an outcome.

Equipment especially to mobilize the Lebanese Army is hugely important. They do have a big border to cover, and they have got an extraordinary military mission in the south, and an unanticipated need for deployments in the Beirut area. This has strained the capacity of the army, no question, and they need this sort of support. Our proposals are very I think realistic in that context.

But you also mentioned that we are not talking about bringing up to even a regional level. This is the good news thing about Lebanon. I think it is not an unhealthy thing that a country that is not very large should not have a huge military. It needs it only for certain purposes, and if it didn't have everyone interfering in their

business and an illegal armed militia at their backs, they would be fine.

So our judgment here is this is a professional outfit. They have handled the equipment we have given to them in the past with discretion and probity. I think the supplies that we gave them in the early eighties can still be accounted for; it didn't leak out. It is taken seriously by Lebanese in that they feel that the army can play an honest role. It is not politicized in the way that some militaries are around the area. Those are good signs.

But yes, absolutely, the request, we would hope, would get the support of all of Congress. And thank you for speaking out on the issue, too.

Mr. ISSA. Well, thank you. And Mr. Chairman, I want to echo your comments or your question that was so probative on Members of Congress going to Syria.

As you know, I was in Syria less than 2 weeks ago; met with President Assad. I totally concur with the Secretary's analysis of what we have learned in the past and present with President Assad.

I will close by saying that Michael Corbin, the chosen Chief of Mission, the Charges there, he is doing an excellent job. Your people have chosen somebody very capable of being a chief of mission at a time when strained relations make it impossible to have an ambassador there. And I think that it is a very difficult time, and I would hope that more Members of Congress do continue to fact-find in the region, and recognize that the State Department has properly assessed at least the historic state of that government and its role in the region.

And I yield back, and thank the chairman for his time.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much. And thank you for participating with us.

Each member has had one turn, and some have expressed some questions that they would like to ask. So with your indulgence, we will continue for a little while longer.

Let me just follow up first on Mr. Issa's question. Does anybody, including themselves, think that the Lebanese need an offensive capability? And have they requested one?

Mr. WELCH. May I just check one thing with the staff?

Mr. ACKERMAN. Surely.

[Pause.]

Mr. WELCH. Our supplemental request is intended for primarily training and equipment. My question to staff was: What does the equipment consist of; and in particular, is there anything that might be deemed under normal circumstances to be useful only for offensive military purposes?

I don't know exactly the answer to that question, Mr. Ackerman. If I might provide it for the record. I recall in looking at the supplemental request that we put forward that it was principally devoted to equipment for mobility purposes, communications, light arms, ammunition, parts, vehicles, including trucks. Not for what might normally be deemed offensive military equipment.

But just to be certain, if I might provide the remainder of that answer for the record.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Certainly. Thank you very much.

Mr. Ward, after the 34 days between Hezbollah and Israel, Hezbollah officials were in south Lebanon handing out packets of United States currency of \$14,000 to people to replace their homes, which I presume made them rather popular during that day or so, and for which they got a lot of credit and a lot of mileage.

How much credit and mileage do we get from the assistance that we provide in south Lebanon? It is not as high-profile, I am sure, but what is it that we do, and what kind of credit do we get?

Mr. WARD. It is a very good question, Mr. Chairman. We, too, put cash into people's hands, although not those kinds of numbers. We tried to enable people to restart businesses with some cash programs right after the crisis abated.

We have some very brave NGOs working in the south, and they have a responsibility under their agreements with us to make clear to the communities that they are working there on behalf of the United States Government.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Do we have a way of monitoring that?

Mr. WARD. We do. It is one of the first things that I look for when I visit a site. That is why I mentioned when I visited the bridge this past weekend, I did not yet see the signage that I should have seen. And that is why I said, I told them as I left, the next time I come back, I want to be sure that as you start construction on this span and people start using it again, that as they drive by they know who is responsible for this enormous engineering effort.

But we do require our NGOs—now, they can ask for a waiver. And we delegated that authority to grant that waiver to our Chiefs of Mission. The good news is, as far as I am aware, none of the NGOs operating in the south have sought that waiver. That is, a waiver so that they would not have to brand, if you will, their activities as coming from the United States.

Mr. ACKERMAN. It would seem to me that what we are doing is minimalistic, if our intent is to win the hearts and minds of people. And we are competing with a terrorist interest that gets all of the credit in the world for everything that they do, even if it is just showboating, and not anything of sustained duration, at least in that cash-for-housing deal that we saw.

Ms. Jackson Lee reminded me, I was cognizant of that in the early eighties, when traveling with her predecessor's predecessor, Congressman Leland. And we were the largest contributor of assistance to Ethiopia. And nowhere did we ever, ever, ever, ever, ever get credit. And all of the NGOs that were working there, which got all the credit in the world for doing the wonderful things that they do tirelessly and ceaselessly, don't do it for credit, but they get the credit. And people didn't know ever.

And we made points, and we have been making it ever since. But we seem to be getting no credit. And there seems to be no program to suggest to NGOs, who are not in the PR business, you know, they don't have a clue as to, because it is not their reason to exist to brag on themselves.

But if we are doing it, both for humanitarian and public policy reasons, I think we have to find a way not just to tell the NGOs if you want to hide where you are getting the money, we will give you a waiver; they have no motivation to tell people it is from us.

Their motivation is to do a good deed, to do the charitable thing, the humane thing.

And I think we are losing a tremendous opportunity. We are taking the opportunity to help people, but winning in this war of public relations to a bunch of terrorists is something that is unfathomable when you think about it. I mean, they don't have a Madison Avenue, but they seem to have more street smarts than we do.

Can we, could there be a program, do you think, to somehow devise—

Mr. WARD. Right. Let me just be clear. We do require the NGOs to put signs on those projects that we are financing. And something that we did for Lebanon that we have not done before—well, we have done it in one other country, in Afghanistan—is that we require all of the NGOs to use a standard sign, so that it—and the sign features the flags of our two countries, and leads with the role of the Government of Lebanon and the role of the Government of the United States, but Lebanon first.

And what we are trying to avoid there, sir, is what we have seen in other countries, where I travel around, and many of us travel around the projects, and you see different signs, different organizations taking credit, not necessarily clear that the United States was behind it; and frankly, a muddle in terms of a message.

We are addressing that in Lebanon, as I said, by insisting on a standard sign. We actually have attached in the grants a picture of what the sign is supposed to be. And the sign was basically designed by Ambassador Feltman in Beirut. So it is an effective message.

We started with what would the message be in Arabic rather than the way we might otherwise do it. Let us take some English and then translate it, and maybe we missed the message. So we have taken the step. We require it, and it is a standard sign.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Is there a department or an agency that sends an auditor out to see if the signs are actually put up?

Mr. WARD. Oh, absolutely. I mean, this is one of the things that when we then do our audits of these grants, it is one of the easiest things for the auditors to check.

Now, here is the challenge. What if you are not doing, what if that grant is not doing infrastructure? You know, sometimes that grant is to do capacity improvements or other things that it is a little hard; you don't know where to put the sign. So you can't always expect to see every program branded.

But for those where it is appropriate, and we make the judgment of what is appropriate, it is required. And it is one of the easiest things, as I say, for our auditors to pick up if it is not being done.

Mr. ACKERMAN. That is a start. And congratulations on that. But the point I am trying to make is there are ways to do this that you and I aren't going to figure out. There are people who do this for a living. There are philanthropists who give out tons of money anonymously, and guess what? They have publicists who somehow let people know where it matters, where that money came from.

And I think we have to be, I mean, if our administration is interested really in outsourcing things, then you need those people who think outside the box on those issues to come in and devise a pro-

gram. And I grant that not every project is one that cries out for bragging rights, nor do we want to put targets on some of the projects. But that is a different determination.

But in projects that help huge numbers of people, there has to be a way to get our message out besides posting a 5x6, whatever the zoning requirements are, sign, and limit it to that. There are a thousand other ways to get that message out. And I think we have to do that, not to pat ourselves on the back, but in order to affect what people are thinking about us. Because we are not winning that war. I am not talking about Lebanon specific now, but we are not winning that war in general, anyplace. Our dollars aren't giving us that dividend, which is a low-cost one for us.

Mr. Pence.

Mr. PENCE. Thank you, Chairman. And I especially want to express my appreciation for your forbearance in permitting my colleague from California to participate in this hearing. He is——

Mr. ACKERMAN. With a great deal of trepidation, without objection.

Mr. PENCE. Noted. But he brings such an important voice to this, and has such a proud heritage. And while we don't always agree on policy positions in this area of the world, I respect him deeply. And I am grateful for your willingness to have him participate.

I also will agree to disagree on the question of recent visits to Syria. With many of my colleagues on this panel, I simply hold the view that while I certainly understand the ability to go on the foreign scene and be misunderstood, I hold to the view that the road to peace does not go through Damascus. And to visit there in and of itself sends a problematic message.

That being said, on a point on which the chairman and I agree very strongly, I would like to give the Secretary a chance to address. Lebanon is one of the last; it is one of the countries in the Middle East with the last substantial Christian population. And frankly, as an Evangelical Christian with a great interest in the history and geography of that region of the world, Lebanon was a world power before the Nazarene walked in Galilee, and its heritage in the Christian faith states to the beginning of the Christian faith.

And it is with that said that, as the chairman and I have discussed privately and as we have discussed in hearings in the past, I am growing increasingly alarmed, as I know many millions of Americans are, with the treatment of Christian populations in Middle Eastern countries. And particularly, while Lebanon no longer has a Christian majority, the treatment of this substantial but dwindling minority is something I think this committee is watching with great interest. And it really argues the fundamental question, which is whether or not, with the rise of radical Islamists manifesting in violent forms in Hezbollah, whether or not a multi-confessional society remains possible in this region of the world.

I hold hope that in my lifetime, the three great Abrahamic traditions of faith might someday see their common foundation, and build a lasting peace in the region on that foundation. But I would love to have you speak to that.

As the chairman and I have observed, I think testimony before this committee suggested that 40 percent of the refugees from Iraq

at this point are Christian Chaldeans. There are reports in areas under the control of the Palestinian Authority that long-time Christian merchants and leaders in communities, whose families date to the region since time and memory run, if not to the contrary, are now experiencing a different level of intolerance by the rise of radical Islamic extremism.

And I just wanted the Secretary, for you to speak to that relative to Lebanon. Because I happen to believe that recognizing Lebanon's I think historic effort to preserve minority religious rights, and its deep moorings as a multi-confessional society, is a wellspring of hope going forward. And I just wonder the degree to which the United States and the State Department were concerned about a rising tide of intolerance toward Christians in Lebanon.

Mr. WELCH. Thank you, Mr. Pence. With respect to maps and which road is the appropriate road into Damascus, I think Congressman Issa can tell you that in all my communications with Congress, I have been on both sides of the aisle in providing them objective advice as to how I see this situation, including in anticipation of his own travel. I say the same thing to one side of the aisle that I say to the other side, sir.

The questions you ask are really serious and important. And having lived in a number of these places where there are substantial Christian populations, I am aware of the complexity of these issues. And it varies from place to place, too. But I sense your unease, and I have to say I share it.

In the case of Lebanon, there is another problem here that we have touched upon in some of the earlier questions and answers. The Lebanese Christian community is divided. One part of it has allied itself politically with those very forces that you mention. I find that, under the circumstances—how to be polite about this—perplexing. I cannot see the interest, either for the nation of Lebanon or for the Christian community in Lebanon in having that happen.

I know that it is a subject of great concern to Christians in Lebanon. I am sure you have met with some of their representatives. I spoke to the Patriarch just the other day about the issue of Christian solidarity there. This is a really, really difficult political problem, in addition to the confessional issues that are already there.

Broadly speaking, I think we, the United States, have an interest in seeing societies protect their diversity as a source of strength, not as a vulnerability. Unfortunately, in certain places in the Middle East it has become a vulnerability to some of these communities. And on the one hand, Christians in certain places, because they have an access to the outside world that has been cultivated by immigrant communities elsewhere, they have a way to escape if they need to. Where on the other hand, that is not a good thing.

I think Lebanese-Americans who are of Christian faith still think about their homeland being also in Lebanon. I am sure that is the case with Iraqis of Christian faith, and I know it is the case of Palestinians of Christian faith. And the conflicts in the area have really problematic impacts on all communities. We are talking now about Christians, but it is not exclusive to only Christians. Chaldean Christians, or Catholic Christians, or even the small

number of Protestants. But it is also there are problems for some Muslim minorities, too, in certain places.

Unfortunately, the Middle East, the number of societies that are diverse, still diverse in any respect, is not high. In Syria, Lebanon, some small part of Palestinian territory still, Iraq, the biggest population of Christians in the Middle East is in Egypt. Otherwise, there is an enormous amount of homogeneity in the populations elsewhere. So I think this imposes a special responsibility on the governments of those countries to find a way to protect minority rights.

And by the way, when I say that, I think that that is broadly speaking, too. Jews' rights in Syria, or Kurdish rights in Syria. Not just those of Christians.

But beyond that, sir, you are quite right to ask these questions. And I hope some time we will have more time to look more thoroughly at the issue. Because the situation of Christian communities in the Middle East is enormously complex. As I said, it varies from place to place. Some of the measures that we might want to see done in one place are not applicable to another, and some of the things that the United States could do would also vary from place to place.

Thank you.

Mr. PENCE. But I don't sense in your answer a particular concern or a particular focus, given the advent of the events of the last 18 months in Lebanon, on the Christian population in that country.

Mr. WELCH. Sir, I didn't mean to leave you with that impression. I tried to direct it starting from the divisions within the Christian community itself.

Mr. PENCE. Right, heard you loud and clear.

Mr. WELCH. But no, I share your concern, okay, as a sense of extremism rises in certain quarters, the impact it can have on minorities, even though some Christians you observe in Lebanon have aligned themselves with those very forces in the political realm.

Mr. PENCE. I think that is a profound mistake.

Mr. WELCH. Thank you.

Mr. PENCE. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Issa.

Mr. ISSA. Thank you for not mentioning—thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for not mentioning the name of President Emil Lahoud. We wouldn't want to pick any particular Christian who has aligned himself with the Syrians and the corruption that comes from that, would we, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. ACKERMAN. I guess we wouldn't.

Mr. ISSA. No, we wouldn't. But you know, there is no question that Lebanon does have some divides beyond that. And the chairman did a wonderful job of sort of describing how, if we can't stop people with our first-world capability from coming into the United States in mass numbers to pick oranges, that border patrols alone will not stop weapons or terrorists or insurgents from coming into a country; and that we have to do something internally.

In the United States, we think we have to figure out how to stop employers from employing those orange-pickers who might not be lawfully here.

But going to Lebanon, prior to the war there were a couple of polls, one I saw from Zogby, that showed that Lebanon was the only place in the Middle East, Arab place in the Middle East, that had a relatively good feeling toward the United States. We were more popular there than almost anywhere else in the Middle East.

The war obviously had a significant effect. Could you just make the record complete in your view of—and Mr. Ward, I am not trying to leave you out, because I think both of you have insight into that—into how it changed, and how big the task is, if you believe it has been hurt, the view of Lebanese toward the United States as an honest broker? As a country that they look to? How much it was hurt, and how you see your reference to get it back, financially and in other ways.

Mr. WELCH. Well, I think in the first instance, that is a question for me, sir, so I will take a stab at it.

In the early days, I think opinion in the region was that this conflict last July was started by the Hezbollah political party, and that they deserved the consequences. But military conflict being what it is, those consequences have a certain dynamic of their own. There is no question that, as the conflict concluded, that public opinion throughout the area had shifted against Israel's actions, which I believe were appropriate to defend itself, sir. And that because we are so closely identified as an ally and supporter of Israel, we had part of that public backlash.

In Lebanon, you are right to point out that generally speaking there is a persistent difference between public opinion in Lebanon and most other places in the region. As a more diverse society and one that traditionally is more open to the West, opinion is more complex.

I wouldn't say that we fully turned around the public image problem, but we have made some progress. Particularly because the United States is so identified in the public eye of Lebanon with the support for the Lebanese people. And in particular, their political rights, especially to be free of foreign interference.

And for most Lebanese, the single greatest threat to their political independence has not been Israel; it has been Syria. And I don't think that any Lebanese could conclude that we are sympathetic to the Syrians on their interference of Lebanon.

Second, our leadership. Since last summer, President Bush, Secretary of State, the American Congress have been very considerable on issues of favor to Lebanon. And I think people understand that.

As you know, Congressman Issa, you are a frequent visitor there, and our diplomatic representatives, Ambassador Feltman especially, are very recognized public figures there. And I measure our effectiveness in branding the good intentions of the United States not simply by a sign, but also by an image. And to be honest with you, every time a poster is held up in a Hezbollah rally that calls Ambassador Feltman the obnoxious Governor General of Lebanon, I phone him up on the phone to congratulate him, because that tells me he is doing a good job at branding America in favor of the right things in this country.

Thank you.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Ward?

Mr. WARD. A little bit different kind of response, very much related to the chairman's questions before.

You know, we have had a long record of assistance in Lebanon at lower levels than we are talking about now with the supplemental. What happened last summer, and the very large response that we have proposed to the Congress, really gives us an opportunity, I think, to have a positive impact on public opinion, as we have with our response in some other major disasters of the natural kind in the last couple of years.

The challenge, as we talked about before, has been getting sustained interest in our response. I mean, let us be honest about this. Unlike the tsunami and the Pakistan earthquake, we did not have United States troops, who are very photogenic, running missions. Well, we had a couple, but we kept it very quiet. They helped bring some medical kits over from Cypress. We have a very small footprint at Embassy Beirut.

Sure, Ambassador Feltman gets out as often as he can. The Aid Director, Ralph Youssef, gets out as much as he can. But it has been more of a challenge there to get the sustained message out, because we didn't have as visible a presence coming in with the initial response.

So we are, we will give all credit to the chairman, but we are engaging experts right now to look at—local experts. I think a mistake would be to bring in the Madison Avenue experts to tell us how to sell this message in a place so far away, but we are engaging Lebanese experts to tell us how best to communicate this message.

One other observation from my trip this last week. I did see some billboards. I won't name countries, but praise other countries hiring other billboards to praise themselves for what they did. I am not sure that is the way to go. And I suspect that they did not engage Lebanese experts to advise them on how best to explain to the Lebanese people what they have done.

And I couldn't agree with the chairman more. The point is not to brag. The point is to educate.

When I speak to Lebanese people about what the United States did to clean up the oil spill, and they say to me oh, we didn't realize that was you, it makes me furious. Then when you explain to them, and you show them the pictures that I have shown you of the before and the after, and you explain that was the United States, they are very grateful. That is the job ahead of us. And I think if we do it right, we might see a bounce in the right direction.

Mr. ISSA. I look forward to seeing examples where we are able to make that progress.

I will close with just—it is a question for you, Mr. Secretary, and a bit of a comment. I know that Congress has not yet made the statement, sort of a line in the sand, that we will never tolerate any country—and I am not picking on Israel, but Israel is the poster child for this—attacking non-combatants and non-combatant areas based on a loose definition of it could be used, as it was in Lebanon, you know, every road and every bridge could be used to resupply Hezbollah.

We as a Congress have not said we won't tolerate that in the future. As a result, my perception is that the Lebanese people live

in fear, and the investment community lives in fear, that whatever they rebuild, as they rebuild splendidly after the Civil War, could be demolished, tens of billions of dollars, in a matter of days by an outside force. And I used Israel, but I am very aware that shelling from Syria could be just as devastating; that there are others who could damage civilian infrastructure as a way of punishing a whole country for their actions. And in the case of Lebanon, their desire not to have the Syrians, their desire to be independent, their desire to be a democracy; all the things that we today have commended in the Lebanese people.

But I also have not heard from the State Department or from our President any sort of a statement that we will be tougher, or that we will increase the stringency of our contribution, militarily or in any other way, to other nations to limit that in the future.

And I asked about the cluster bombs because I believe they were used completely inappropriately. I think they were used as a final punishment to a broad area, well beyond that of Hezbollah, just as I believe that those attacks on bridges and oil storage facilities were intended to punish a government that hadn't done enough, in the opinion of another government.

Are you in a position to show us examples where, either through the State Department or through this administration at other levels, there is an assurance to the people of Lebanon that if they rebuild, they will not be once again punished for something over which they have little or no control?

Mr. WELCH. Congressman, Resolution 1701 applies not merely to all member states of the United Nations as an active international law, but it applies particularly to Israel and to Lebanon. It is a protection for Lebanese sovereignty and security, just as much as it is for Israeli sovereignty and security.

And it is incumbent upon Israel to comport itself accordingly. That means that no violations of that border should occur in either direction in the future.

Circumstances being what they are, and the influence of other groups and actors being what they are in Lebanon, I can't guarantee that that will always be the case. But I have confidence that that point is not lost on the Israeli Government, any more than it is lost on the Lebanese Government.

Sir, I just want to—I know you don't mean this in your question, but I want to say it for the record. The United States, and particularly this administration, did not give permissions to anyone for attacks on civilian targets. We don't do that. We caution against the disproportionate use of military force, and against certain types of targeting in particular. And we by all means gave no one permission to attack non-combatants.

Mr. ISSA. Thank you. And certainly I did not, I don't believe that. I believe that we were impotent in our ability to stop it, but we were not without the desire to limit the attacks or the damage that occurred outside of legitimate combatant areas. And I appreciate your clarifying that, because I think it is important that Secretary Rice, yourself, and others worked very hard trying not to have the damage done in a broad way to the people of Lebanon that actually occurred.

Mr. Chairman, once again, thank you for holding this hearing. Thank you for allowing the record to be made as complete as possible in the time allotted. And I yield back, and thank you.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I thank the gentleman, and I thank him for his participation and his valuable contribution to the subcommittee's proceedings.

Let me make a couple of comments and ask a question or two. I daresay that the war on terrorism is very difficult and very complex. With permission or not, nations have a right and responsibility to protect themselves and their citizens from those who attack it. I can't even contemplate the number of innocent civilians that were killed in Afghanistan as we bombed it. I cannot think of the number of innocent civilian Iraqis that, during the time of shock and awe, who might have been inadvertently killed by U.S. bombs in our attempt to rout the terrorists.

I would suggest that that number is geometrically more expansive than the unfortunate number—and I mean that sincerely—of innocent Lebanese civilians who were killed as Israel pursued terrorists.

But I would observe that the President himself, at the outset of our war on terrorism, besides all the bravado and if you are not with us you are against us, and dead or alive, and all that kind of stuff, also said that we have a problem not just with the terrorists, but with those who harbor the terrorists.

And I would think that Lebanon, which we all want to support, which we all want to succeed—I will give you the analysis of a person, a homeowner who claims that the terrorists living in his house are not welcome, and then objects when the police break down the door to get them, because they were committing terrorist acts from within the house. And whose job is it then to fix the house? Well, that is an open question, I guess.

But certainly, no one can fault the United States for pursuing terrorists. Whether or not they attacked us could be a matter of some controversy, which terrorists attacked us, with some people here in our country, and that is a legitimate debate.

But certainly the Hezbollah attacks across the Lebanese border on Israel bear no controversy to the source. They don't confess to it, they brag on it. They issue statements about it when they blow up people's homes and kids in nursery school and playing outside in the playground and what-have-you.

The Israelis have every single right and obligation to pursue terrorists. If the terrorists can strike across the Lebanese border into the sovereign state of Israel, and snatch soldiers and kidnap them, and hold them, and not even let the world know whether they are living or dead, whether they are well, whether they are sick, whether they are injured or not, in controversy to international law and all human instincts for good behavior, then the Israelis have a right to pursue.

It is more than regrettable when innocent people die. It happens all the time in police chases, in civilian criminal matters in places in our very civilized country. But that doesn't mean that you can't stop chasing the bad guys. And certainly we and other countries have to be much more careful and review the policies as to what

equipment and what military assets they might use, and I would assume that is under review.

But certainly we have not made, as far as I know, any public declaration of the appropriateness of what the Israelis used. Certainly they have a right to pursue the bad guys. Especially if those bad guys are operating from behind someone else's border, and the people whose border it is claims that those people aren't welcome to do the things that they do. That is an observation of mine.

I would like to, you can respond to that, but I will pose a question, as well. After the Israeli/Hezbollah altercation, what happened to Hezbollah popularity, then and now, in Lebanon? How did they view Israelis instantly after the altercation? And how do they view Americans? I don't know whatever popularity the Hezbollah had; the pollsters might call it a bump or boost for them, and certainly the Israelis probably weren't popular. But I am merely curious as to what happened with the small passage of time in Lebanese public opinion toward us and the Israelis and Hezbollah. And maybe both of you can offer an opinion on that. And I know you are not posters, but you have a pretty good ear.

Mr. WELCH. My sense is that the consequences of the conflict last summer were so considerable for Lebanese that public anger over this event was enormously high, and to some degree has persisted.

Let me give you a couple of examples of the impact of this conflict. The summer tourism season in Lebanon was ruined. Those jobs, particularly in Beirut, they are not distributed unevenly among the confessions; they randomly distributed and affected everybody.

One out of every four, at minimum one out of every five, Lebanese was displaced from their homes by this conflict. The losses to infrastructure and normal economic activity were staggering. And the average Lebanese——

Mr. ACKERMAN. Just a clarification of that statistic. One out of five left their homes?

Mr. WELCH. Displaced.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Displaced. You are not suggesting 20 percent of the homes were destroyed.

Mr. WELCH. No, sir. Displaced. Fled because their home might have been destroyed, or because they were afraid, or had to move because of military conflict. But I think they blamed everybody for that.

Our sense is, after the events, that the "support" for what Hassan Nasrallah would like to present as the nationalist objectives of Hezbollah has suffered dramatically. Most people don't believe that message. But support within his own community for Hezbollah may even have increased.

Again, we don't have a scientific measurement of that, but that seems to be the case. He doesn't, of course, represent all Lebanese, and I am not sure exactly what percentage of the population is Sh'ia. But within Hezbollah's particular areas of control, support remains pretty strong.

Meanwhile, the views of all the other Lebanese have, I think if anything, gone in the direction that they were headed in the conflict. That is, they are fed up with this problem; they don't understand why these people are taking over what ought to be sovereign

national decisions of the country, and making them in the name of all Lebanese. And that is one of the reasons we see the political conflict that we see right now, even in the streets.

The measurement of public opinion in the Arab world is an uneven exercise, Mr. Chairman, as you know. But the one thing that is different about Lebanon is the opinions are much more freely expressed and out in the open. And I think we can see by the degree of the political debate and conflict that has gone on there, that there are a lot of people who feel very strongly about those events.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Administrator Ward?

Mr. WARD. A couple of observations I think are responsive. It is very interesting that the NGOs that we fund, with funds appropriated by the Congress, are very welcome all over the country, even in those communities where Hezbollah is prominent. And the communities know, even if they don't have a sign up, who is supporting those NGOs' activities.

I think Hezbollah has also learned something that we live with in the donor business, since its promises last fall about \$14,000 to \$20,000, whatever the number was, to every family that had to rebuild, that donors raise expectations. And then if you don't come through, people start grumbling. People are grumbling now.

It is anecdotal at this point, but when we send people into the south and they talk to communities about our programs, we don't send people down there to sow discord about Hezbollah; we are too busy to do that. But when we send people down to begin our long-term programs, which are going to be longer term and more sustainable than anything Hezbollah can do, what we are hearing is that the promises of the cash to rebuild didn't come through in the numbers that were promised.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Well, let me make the observation, but let me first compliment the witnesses for a very, very thorough testimony, and being so responsive to the questions of our committee. You have made a large contribution to our understanding.

Let me also observe that it has come about that the witnesses are beginning to outnumber the committee, and we will therefore beat a hasty advance to the rear. And with our thanks, the panel is dismissed, and the committee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:47 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

