

of countries sponsoring terrorism since the list began in 1979, and recent intelligence reports have only confirmed what we have long thought to be true—that Syria remains an incubator of terrorism and instability in the Middle East and throughout the world.

Syria has refused to shut down the offices of the Islamic Jihad, has permitted weapons to flow freely to Hezbollah, and has allowed Hezbollah to expand terrorist training operations. These terrorists have attacked innocent men, women and children in Israel, and Syria's unwillingness to put a halt to this lawlessness threatens not only Israel but also stability and peace in the region.

In addition to the devastating effect of the Syrian government's willingness to crack down on known terrorist groups within its borders, Syria has allowed fighters seeking to harm American troops to cross its borders. As we ask more and more American service members to put themselves in harm's way in defense of our Nation, it is critical that we also take steps to protect them from known threats.

We must act now by sending a clear message to Syria that they must take a strong stand against terrorism, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the Syria Accountability Act.

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, the Syria Accountability Act comes to the House floor at a time when the situation in the Middle East is more volatile than ever: the United States' effort to gain control of the situation in Iraq; the breakdown of the Israeli and Palestinian peace negotiations; and the new tensions between Syria, Lebanon and Israel are all major concerns of U.S. Middle East policy.

The proposed legislation, H.R. 1828, could harm the United States' ability to influence various actors in the region and could seriously impair U.S. diplomatic efforts at a very critical time in the Middle East.

At this critical juncture in America's War on Terrorism we should work with Nations like Syria who are aiding our pursuit of the terrorists who attacked America on 9-11.

Since September 11th, 2001, Syria has quietly helped the United States by detaining suspected members of Osama bin Laden's organization. Our government should continue its diplomatic relations with Syria in order to capture these terrorists.

Syria supported the United States by voting in support of U.N. Resolution 1441 asking Iraq to comply with the United Nations and to allow inspectors back into the country.

During America's Operation Iraqi Freedom, Syria assisted the U.S. by supplying power to northern Iraq, thus calming the population, and undoubtedly saving American troops' lives.

In a most recent act of cooperation with the United States and at our request, Damascus has opened its financial and banking institutions allowing us to trace the accounts of the former Saddam Hussein regime.

Syria is currently designated by the U.S. State Department as a state-sponsor of terrorism and, therefore, is already ineligible for U.S. assistance and faces numerous, strict sanctions. This legislation would further restrict the already limited leverage we have with Syria.

Instead of singling out Syria for developing weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles, Congress should instead support United Nations resolutions (687, par. 14) pursuing the goal of declaring the whole Middle East a region free from all such weapons and delivery systems. This bill lacks credibility by ignoring Israel's own advanced pursuit of such weapons including nuclear arms.

Imposing unilateral sanctions on Syria would hurt American businesses. At a time when our country is facing increasing unemployment rates, Congress and the Administration should take action to foster economic growth and trade, including with countries in the Middle East, to foster an increase in American jobs.

European and Russian companies have already made contact with Syrian businesses hoping to move in as American companies are forced to leave after adoption of SAA.

This legislation attempts to adopt a simplistic approach to Lebanese-Syrian relations. Both Syria and Lebanon are sovereign countries capable of resolving their own differences without U.S. congressional meddling.

Now is not the time to limit American options as we seek to pursue a long-term comprehensive political solution to conflict in the Middle East. Therefore, I urge my colleagues to stand in opposition to H.R. 1828 as we must remain focused on the difficult issues of the Middle East already at hand.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my strong opposition to this ill-conceived and ill-timed legislation. This bill will impose what is effectively a trade embargo against Syria and will force the severance of diplomatic and business ties between the United States and Syria. It will also significantly impede travel between the United States and Syria. Worse yet, the bill also provides essentially an open-ended authorization for the president to send U.S. taxpayer money to Syria should that country do what we are demanding in this bill.

This bill cites Syria's alleged support for Hamas, Hizballah, Palestine Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and other terrorist groups as evidence that Syria is posing a threat to the United States. But none of these organizations targets the United States. Not since the Hizballah bombing of a U.S. Marine barracks in Lebanon in 1983 has any of these organizations attacked the United States. After that attack on our Marines, who were sent to Beirut to intervene in a conflict that had nothing to do with the United States, President Ronald Reagan wisely ordered their withdrawal from that volatile area. Despite what the interventionists constantly warn, the world did not come to an end back in 1983 when the president decided to withdraw from Beirut and leave the problems there to be worked out by those countries most closely involved.

What troubles me greatly about this bill is that although the named, admittedly bad, terrorist organizations do not target the United States at present, we are basically declaring our intention to pick a fight with them. We are declaring that we will take preemptive actions against organizations that apparently have no quarrel with us. Is this wise, particularly considering their capacity to carry out violent acts against those with whom they are in conflict? Is this not inviting trouble by stirring up a hornet's nest? Is there anything to be gained in this?

This bill imposes an embargo on Syria for, among other reasons, the Syrian government's inability to halt fighters crossing the Syrian border into Iraq. While I agree that any foreign fighters coming into Iraq to attack American troops is totally unacceptable, I wonder just how much control Syria has over its borders—particularly over the chaotic border with Iraq. If Syria has no control over its borders, is it valid to impose sanctions on the country for its inability to halt clandestine bor-

der crossings? I find it a bit ironic to be imposing a trade embargo on Syria for failing to control its borders when we do not have control of our own borders. Scores cross illegally into the United States each year—potentially including those who cross over with the intent to do us harm—yet very little is done to secure our own borders. Perhaps this is because our resources are too engaged guarding the borders of countless countries overseas. But there is no consistency in our policy. Look at the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan: while we continue to maintain friendly relations and deliver generous foreign aid to Pakistan, it is clear that Pakistan does not control its border with Afghanistan. In all likelihood, Osama bin Laden himself has crossed over the Afghan border into Pakistan. No one proposes an embargo on Pakistan. In all likelihood, Osama bin Laden himself has crossed over the Afghan border into Pakistan. On the contrary: the supplemental budget request we are taking up this week includes another \$200 million in loan guarantees to Pakistan.

I am also concerned about the timing of this bill. As we continue to pursue Al-Qaeda—most of which escaped and continue to operate—it seems to me we need all the help we can get in tracking these criminals down and holding them to account for the attack on the United States. As the AP reported recently:

So, too, are Syria's claims, supported by U.S. intelligence, that Damascus has provided the United States with valuable assistance in countering terror.

The Syrians have in custody Mohammed Haydar Zammer, believed to have recruited some of the Sept. 11 hijackers, and several high-level Iraqis who were connected to the Saddam Hussein government have turned up in U.S. custody.

Numerous other press reports detail important assistance Syria has given the U.S. after 9/11. If Syria is providing assistance to the U.S. in tracking these people down—any assistance—passing this bill can only be considered an extremely positive and welcome development. Does anyone here care to guess how much assistance Syria will be providing us once this bill is passed? Can we afford to turn our back on Syria's assistance, even if it is not as complete as it could be?

That is the problem with this approach. Imposing sanctions and cutting off relations with a country is ineffective and counterproductive. It is only one-half step short of war and very often leads to war. This bill may well even completely eliminate any trade between the two countries. It will almost completely shut the door on diplomatic relations. It sends a strong message to Syria and the Syrian people: that we no longer wish to engage you. This cannot be in our best interest.

This bill may even go further than that. In a disturbing bit of déjà vu, the bill makes references to "Syria's acquisition of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)" and threatens to "impede" Syrian weapons ambitions. This was the justification for our intervention in Iraq, yet after more than a thousand inspectors have spent months and some 300 million dollars none have been found. Will this bill's unproven claims that Syria has WMD be later used to demand military action against that country?

Mr. Speaker: history is replete with examples of the futility of sanctions and embargoes

and travel bans. More than 40 years of embargo against Cuba have not produced the desired change there. Sadly, embargoes and sanctions most often hurt those least responsible. A trade embargo against Syria will hurt American businesses and will cost American jobs. It will make life more difficult for the average Syrian—with whom we have no quarrel. Making life painful for the population is not the best way to win over hearts and minds. I strongly urge my colleagues to reject this counterproductive bill.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1828, the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003.

Mr. Speaker, the United States and our allies around the world have stood steadfast in holding accountable terrorist states, those who harbor or otherwise provide sanctuary for terrorist, or those who threaten the world with weapons of mass destruction. That's what the legislation before us today is all about.

The Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003 does not advocate the use of force against Syria. Instead, it gives the President and the Secretary of State expanded authority to impose U.S. diplomatic and economic sanctions against Syria unless serious action is taken by Syria to rid itself of the cancer of terror and the policies by which terror manifests itself throughout the region and the world.

It's no secret that Syria hosts terrorist organizations including Hizballah, Hamas, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, all of which maintain offices, training camps, and other facilities within Syrian borders and within areas of Lebanon currently occupied by Syria. This is a threat that simply cannot continue to be ignored.

This Act holds Syria accountable for its part in facilitating terrorism and in so doing, threatening the world. It requires Syria to withdraw from the nation of Lebanon, and to finally cease Syria's ongoing pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. It calls for sanctions against Syria including a prohibition on the export of defense and dual-use items. In addition, it also requires the President to impose two or more sanctions which may be waived in the interest of national security. These are: prohibiting the export of products of the U.S. other than food and medicine to Syria; prohibiting U.S. businesses from investing or operating in Syria; restricting the travel of Syrian diplomats to within a 25-mile radius of Washington, DC or the United Nations; reducing levels of U.S. diplomatic contracts with Syria; and blocking transactions in any property in which the Government of Syria has any interest.

Mr. Speaker, let us act today and hold accountable terrorist states by eliminating policies which advance terrorism. Let us pass the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003.

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a cosponsor of H.R. 1828, the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003, and am even prouder still to see it on the floor of the House of Representatives today.

This important piece of legislation gives the president the diplomatic tools necessary to hold Syria accountable for its support of terrorism, its weapons of mass destruction program and its occupation of Lebanon. Syria should not be allowed to support terrorist ac-

tivity from groups, such as Hezbollah and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, with continued impunity.

Passage of this bill will require that sanctions be imposed on Syria unless the president can certify that it has taken steps to end its support of terrorism, discontinue its weapons of mass destruction program, and end its occupation of Lebanon. Sanctions could include banning most U.S. exports to, and investment in, Syria; restricting the movement of Syrian diplomats here in the United States; barring Syrian aircraft from our airspace; and freezing Syrian assets in our country.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support this important legislation, which will put appropriate pressure on a regime that continues to support groups that perpetrate heinous acts of terror against the people of democratic Israel and that further destabilizes an already volatile region.

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1828, a resolution that calls for an end to Syria's support for terrorism and an end to its occupation of Lebanon.

In his 2003 State of the Union address, President Bush stated that the gravest danger facing the United States in the war on terrorism is the acquisition by other countries of weapons of mass destruction, and that we must confront this danger. A senior Administration official recently testified before the Committee on International Relations that Syria remains a security concern as a supporter of international terrorism and weapons of mass destruction proliferation.

I commend the Administration's efforts to reach a diplomatic solution with Syria. President Bush has consistently called on Syria to close its terrorist camps and to expel terrorist organizations. Secretary Powell has worked diligently with the Syrian government towards ending its occupation of Lebanon. Since 1990, the U.S. Congress has passed seven resolutions calling on the withdrawal of Syrian armed forces from Lebanon. Many members of Congress—including myself—have been to Syria and urged the Syrian government to work with the United States in the war against terrorism. And despite our diplomatic efforts, Syria has not fulfilled its pledge to work with us.

Mr. Speaker, we know that Syria continues to offer protection to terrorist groups such as Hizballah, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Recently, Syria conducted efforts to acquire technology that could be applied to a nuclear weapons program. Syria has also undermined coalition efforts to bring stability to Iraq by allowing volunteers to cross the border and fight our service members. And as we all know, Syria has ignored numerous United Nations resolutions calling on Syria to end its occupation of Lebanon, a sovereign nation.

H.R. 1828 would hold Syria accountable for the serious international security problems it has caused in the Middle East. This resolution would instruct the President to impose economic sanctions on Syria until the Department of State determines that Syria ceases to provide support to international terrorist groups, ceases the development and deployment of weapons, and withdraws all military forces from Lebanon.

Mr. Speaker, despite our many attempts to reach a diplomatic solution, Syria continues to obstruct our efforts in the war against terrorism. I support H.R. 1828 and encourage my colleagues in the House to vote in favor of this important resolution.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, for far too long, Syria has been an exceedingly irresponsible partner in the troubled Middle East. By our actions over the last two years, the United States has already sent a strong message to Syria and has gotten some cooperation in anti-terrorist efforts.

The current downward spiral of violence is not working for the Palestinians and is not making Israel more secure. We should use our resources to get the parties to resume steps to reduce pressures, tensions and bloodshed.

Since I agree with the indictments of Syrian behavior contained in H.R. 1828 I would not be comfortable voting "no." Yet, I agree with most independent commentators that passage at this time would not be helpful for our efforts to advance the peace. I choose to vote "present."

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to enter into the RECORD an opinion piece that I wrote about the future of our relationship with Syria. This piece was published in the San Francisco Chronicle on October 14, 2003.

I also want to join my colleagues today in expressing deep concern about the choices that Syria has made over the past year. This is a sad day for American diplomacy. The passage of this bill, after more than two years of debate, marks the refusal of Syria to accept our diplomatic overtures. Syria has had numerous opportunities to demonstrate that it intends to move away from the policies that keep it on the State Department's list of state sponsors of terror. It has consistently missed those opportunities, and now faces the specter of isolation.

Syria had the chance to play a key role in securing the release of Elhanan Tenebaum, Adi Avitan, Benny Avraham, and Omar Sawayid—Israeli soldiers kidnapped by Hezbollah. They refused, perpetuating a hostage situation that makes peace negotiations more difficult.

Syria had the chance to grant the United States use of its airspace for Operation Iraqi Freedom. They refused, thereby dramatically increasing the risk of mission failure for American pilots.

Syria had the chance to build good will toward the United States by staying out of the war in Iraq. They refused, allowing jihadis and military equipment to flow across their borders to kill American soldiers.

Syria had the chance to demonstrate its commitment to the peace process by supporting President Bush's Roadmap to Peace initiative. Secretary Powell specifically asked Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to close offices of Palestinian terrorist groups and to expel terrorist leaders operating out of Damascus. He refused, choosing instead to continue Syrian financial and logistical support for terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians.

Following the war in Iraq, Syria had the chance to build good will in the United Nations. They were repeatedly asked to support a constructive UN presence in Iraq. Instead, they opted to pursue a diplomatic agenda that drove divisions between the United States and other members of the UN Security Council.

Syria has had the chance to withdraw its troops and end its dominance of Lebanon. They refused, choosing to maintain their intimidating military and intelligence presence in Lebanon.