

population of Americans who will increasingly be looking to their own efforts in order to provide for their retirement years.

Mr. President, this planning for retirement will make a difference in the lives of millions of Americans today and in the future and in the communities in which they live. If we take steps today to secure the pension and retirement benefits of Americans, we will be making a contribution to the well-being of those families, communities, and the Nation.

I commend the leadership for having brought this important issue to such a level of priority in this 105th Congress and urge all of my colleagues to give it the appropriate consideration and support for the security of American families.

I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ALLARD). Under the previous order, the Senator from West Virginia is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. BYRD pertaining to the introduction of S. 182 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

#### NOVEMBER 1996 TRIP TO THE NORTH ATLANTIC ASSEMBLY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, as has always been my practice on return home from official travels overseas, I have sought recognition today to record for the information of our colleagues and my constituents in Pennsylvania the results of my recess trip, from November 16 to November 24, to the North Atlantic Assembly and to the Middle East.

As you know, the Senate delegation in November 1996 to the North Atlantic Assembly included 13 Senators during all or part of a full schedule of meetings in Paris and London, arranged and ably chaired by Senator ROTH. Let me take a moment to note here the important news of Senator ROTH's election as the President of the North Atlantic Assembly.

Our delegation's mission began with a working flight to Paris early in the morning on Saturday, November 16. As the presiding officer knows how rare it is for eight Senators to share 7½ hours together—especially in the absence of a telephone—I know you can appreciate the value of this group of colleagues being able to exchange views and form plans relevant to the 105th Congress.

In Paris and, later in the week, in London, our Senate North American Assembly Delegation focused its work on the vital—but vexing—questions of the purposes, the structures and the problems of transatlantic relations in the post cold war era.

NATO has been perhaps the most successful international collective secu-

rity arrangement in the world's history, ultimately achieving its once thought unattainable goal of containing and outlasting the empire of the former Soviet Union through a vigilant deterrence rather than actual conflict. It was this successful because it is more than a mutual defense pact. It is the coming together, across the Atlantic, of the power of the ideas of freedom and democracy. But NATO's very success in achieving its original aim is the basis of the present quandary of the alliance. In the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, we must ask for many reasons—including our responsibility to wisely spend the American taxpayers' dollars—what is NATO for now, what countries should be a part of the alliance and what roles and burdens should be played and borne by the different members of the North Atlantic community.

Our Senate delegation took up these questions—and many subordinate ones as well, including the allied operation in Bosnia and trade and economic relations across the Atlantic—with our European parliamentary colleagues, senior officials of the executives of France, Britain, and other allied nations, international business leaders and, of course, our American Ambassadors and their staffs.

Apart from the formal itinerary of the entire delegation, I made a point to visit with Alan J. Blinken, the America Ambassador in Brussels, headquarters of the European Economic Community, to discuss the transatlantic trade situation and other matters, and to engage in substantive conversations with our Ambassador to France, Pamela Harriman, concerning a variety of security and international economic issues.

At mid-week, specifically, from Tuesday, November 19 through Thursday, November 21, I split off from my North American Assembly colleagues for an individual visit to the Middle East.

As the presiding officer is well aware, I have reported to the Senate and my constituents many times on my visits to the Middle East, visits I began making in 1964, some 16 years prior to my election to the Senate. As a Senator, I have traveled extensively in this vital, but deeply troubled, part of the world in order to better fulfill my responsibilities as a member of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of Appropriations—where I have been a member since coming to the Senate—and my roles as chairman of the Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Terrorism and as chairman of the Select Committee on Intelligence, as well as my general duties as a Senator to be informed on a part of the world frequently requiring action by this body.

This past August, the first visit to the Middle East I had made since the Israeli elections of May 1996, my trip became something more than a fact-finding assessment of the always changing situation in that part of the world when Prime Minister Netanyahu

asked me to carry a message to Syrian President Assad concerning the Prime Minister's views on the reopening of peace talks between Israel and Syria and, in an even more time-sensitive vein, on Israeli thinking regarding Syrian troop movements occurring at that time in Lebanon and in areas of Syria near the Israeli controlled Golan Heights.

As I stated on the floor upon my return at that time, I carried Prime Minister Netanyahu's messages to President Assad in Damascus and, following a substantive 3-hour exchange with the Syrian leader—with whom I have been meeting regularly since 1988—I returned to Israel to brief Prime Minister Netanyahu on President Assad's responses to the messages.

In preparation for my joining the North Atlantic Assembly Delegation visit to Europe—because I would be half-way there, so to speak—I met here in Washington with the Syrian Ambassador to the United States, Walid Al-Moualem, to get an update from his perspective on the situation between Syria and Israel. Ambassador Al-Moualem told me that his government viewed my August round of talks between Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Assad as having been helpful in deescalating the dangerous tensions, especially related to troop movements, between Israel and Syria and the Ambassador encouraged me to return to the region for another round of meetings aimed at helping the parties find a basis to reopen their peace negotiations.

Now, I do not know if the Ambassador is correct in his characterization of my August meetings as helpful in reducing military tensions, but I told him that I obviously would make myself available to be helpful—without seeking either to displace the President or his representatives in this matter and without seeking to advance any personal agenda on the substance of an Israeli-Syrian peace—if both sides had an interest in my so doing.

When consultations with Israeli officials, including a telephone conversation I had directly with Prime Minister Netanyahu, indicated a similar encouragement for me to make another visit to Israel and Syria as had been expressed by the Syrian Ambassador, I decided to make such a trip during a portion of the North Atlantic Assembly Delegation program in Europe.

Naturally, and any press accounts at the time to the contrary notwithstanding, I and my staff both informed the State Department about my planned trip and received extensive briefings by relevant administration officials as to the Israeli/Syrian situation and administration policy on the matter.

Mr. President, as you know, this sort of active involvement in foreign policy issues is, while—as I have already said—not meant to supplant the President, the Secretary of State or their representatives, a time-honored role for Members of the U.S. Senate, going

back to such distinguished Senators as Arthur Vandenburg and William Fulbright. In any case, one could not responsibly pass up even a slight chance of being helpful in promoting peace between Israel and Syria when the alternative to peace could threaten dire consequences for us all.

I met with Prime Minister Netanyahu at 8 a.m. on Wednesday, November 20 at his office in the Israeli Knesset Building. United States Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk was present. The Prime Minister told me that tensions with Syria have been reduced since the August/September time period and that he wants to continue to de-escalate the saber-rattling. He asked me to convey this, and specifically that Israel has no aggressive intent against Syria, when I went on to see President Assad that afternoon. He noted as an exception to the reduction of military dangers attacks on Israeli forces in southern Lebanon by Hezbollah and asked me to convey his request to President Assad that Syria seek to stop the Hezbollah attacks.

On the broader issue of reopening peace talks with Syria, Prime Minister Netanyahu told me to tell President Assad that he wishes to do so as soon as possible and that he is ready, willing, and able to be personally involved in such talks. He said that although there are clearly tough issues to be addressed in negotiating with Syria, he has a real sense that talks could be productive. Prime Minister Netanyahu reiterated that any talks with Syria will be based on the framework for Arab/Israel peace established by U.N. resolutions 242 and 338 and by the terms of reference of the 1991 Middle East peace conference organized by President Bush in Madrid. The Prime Minister's willingness to state the basis of talks with Syria in this way is significant because it indicates an acceptance that such talks would be based on the formula standardly called "land for peace."

The Prime Minister held his ground, however, on what has been the Syrian demand that new talks begin where the old talks left off, that is that Prime Minister Netanyahu's government be bound as a condition for reopening talks by what the Syrians consider a commitment by the prior Israel governments of Prime Ministers Rabin and Peres to full withdrawal by Israel from the Golan Heights to the June 4, 1967 line. He stated that he would not and could not agree to talks with such a precondition.

I flew on to Damascus that day and held a wide ranging, cordial but frank 3-hour meeting with President Assad, lasting from 1:20 p.m. to 4:20 p.m. Syrian Foreign Minister Sharra and United States Ambassador to Syria, Christopher Ross, were also present.

I raised with President Assad the mounting evidence of Iranian and perhaps Syrian involvement in or connection to the dastardly act of terrorist murder against United States soldiers

at Khobar Towers in Dharhan, in Saudi Arabia, on June 15, 1996. I reminded President Assad that the United States had responded militarily against Libya in 1986 when we received proof of Libyan responsibility for a bombing at a nightclub in Germany which killed two American servicemen.

Our exchange on this subject was pointed but it was incumbent on me to take this opportunity of a face-to-face session at this time to reiterate that the United States cannot be targeted by terrorists with impunity.

On the central purpose of the meeting, I regret to say I can report little progress, frankly less than I had hoped based on the encouragement I had received to make this visit and on public statements by the Syrian Foreign Minister about the possibility of renewing talks with Israel.

President Assad did generally seem to share Prime Minister Netanyahu's desire to continue to ease and avoid military tensions which could lead to unintended hostilities. Although he denied having the ability to control Hezbollah activities in Lebanon, President Assad received this portion of Prime Minister Netanyahu's message positively and reiterated his own return message to the same effect. President Assad's position was unmovable, however, regarding the terms for the reopening of talks with Israel.

The Syrian leader asserts with complete conviction that he will not restart talks without a prior reaffirmation by Israel of the pledge he says he received from the prior Israeli governments, and ratified in his view by the United States as participants in the talks, for full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights. In his view the next round of talks are only properly about the details of security arrangements along the new border and the process of normalization between the countries, not on the territorial question itself. This is not a "precondition" for future talks, he argues, because Syria already obtained this commitment from Israel and the United States in the prior talks and that commitment binds Israel despite its change of government.

I attempted to argue to President Assad that in any negotiation such as that between Syria and Israel, nothing is final until everything is final, and that in the absence of any signed document binding Israel as a state, the new Israeli government was not obligated by the negotiating position of a former administration. I also argued that Prime Minister Netanyahu's public comments accepting the land for peace framework for talks with Syria should be a sufficient basis to get back to the table and see what happens in that very different dynamic. I tried many formulations of these ideas but he would have none of it.

I returned to Israel that evening and met again with Prime Minister Netanyahu, to brief him on my talks with President Assad, on the following morning, Thursday, November 21, 1996.

While there is certainly a very sharp divide between the Israeli and Syrian leaders on the basis for a reopening of peace talks, I continue to believe that such a return to the negotiating table is not only essential, but possible if the American involvement in this process is taken to a new level. I came away from this round of meetings convinced that the logjam might be broken, but only with direct action by the President of the United States.

The United States has been more than an observer or facilitator of the Israeli/Syrian peace process so far. We have been an indispensable party, viewed by both sides as the guarantor of the integrity of both the negotiating process and of any final outcome which might be achieved. If the different accounts of where the last round of talks left off and what that means for future talks are to be resolved, it will happen only with the most active American role at the highest level.

Since my return, I have discussed with the President's National Security advisor—and CIA Director designee—Anthony Lake, and his Special Middle East Envoy, Dennis Ross, and I intend to discuss with the President directly, my suggestion that President Clinton invite President Assad—who has never been to this country—and Prime Minister Netanyahu to a meeting in the Oval Office—not to conclude a final peace treaty at this time but simply to find a formula for the reopening of talks between their countries.

While nothing is ever certain in such a difficult situation, I believe it would be productive for the President to raise the stakes of the peace process between Israel and Syria—as an Oval Office invitation would surely do—because the stakes of a continued state of war between these two countries remain so high.

Mr. President, we must all continue to do all we can to find the path to a just and secure peace in the Middle East.

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#### HONORING DAN KEMMIS

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to recognize a truly outstanding Montanan, and to make note of the recent honor extended to him by President Clinton.

Many in Montana know Dan Kemmis through his years of devoted public service, first in the Montana Legislature, where he rose to the position of Speaker of the House, and later as Mayor of the City of Missoula. In every aspect of public life, Dan has served as an example of the standards to which we all aspire. A true gentleman and a model leader he is a public servant who believes that the true greatness of democracy lives in the shared experience of the citizenry.

As mayor, even while working diligently on the problems of the day, Dan continued to think ahead, authoring "Community and the Politics of Place" in 1990, the acclaimed book serving as a