

who do good work. But Dave Hoppe is one who does work that is at the top of the list.

Mr. LOTT. I thank the Senator from Nevada for his comments. He is right. At those countless meetings we had in the back of the Chamber, the center aisle, the cloakroom, or in our offices, Dave Hoppe was always there, committed to his philosophy and principles, but always equally committed to getting results for the Senate and for the nation.

I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, others have spoken of their impressions and reflections on Dave Hoppe today, and I would like to take a moment to add my thoughts.

While our constituents rely on us as their voice and advocate here in Washington, we rely on our staff to be our voice and advocate. Under our guidance our staff investigate and learn about the many issues that confront us; they work with a wide variety of people in all branches of the government; they give us their best counsel and advice; and they help us perform a myriad of tasks that are vital to ensuring the institution of the Senate works well and effectively, and that we give our best on behalf of the people we serve. Our staffs amplify our work with our colleagues, our counterparts in the House, the executive branch, and our constituents.

For over a decade now, Dave has worked for all Senate Republicans in a variety of positions, in our conference secretary's office, the majority whip's office, and, for the past 6 years, as chief of staff in the Republican leader's office. This specialized role isn't for the faint of heart, and requires a unique blend of skills and attributes.

Dave's commitment, dedication, and hard work have generated quiet appreciation and deep respect from many different Members in the Senate and House over the years. His ability to faithfully and tirelessly represent our shared Republican ideas and ideals, working with all members of our conference to knit them together, is impressive. From the most major issues of war or impeachment, to the most mundane of haggling out unanimous consent agreements, his involvement and advice and leadership on countless issues over his tenure has served all of us well.

While unflinching in his core beliefs and principles, his willingness to work with the Democratic counterparts is also noteworthy, for in the Senate, so often it is partnership, not partisanship, that ensures we make progress on behalf of the American people. For example, across the aisle, across the rotunda, and across various ideologies, he took a major leadership role in improv-

ing one of the flagship Federal programs for disable children. With round-the-clock work, good humor, and grace, he spearheaded a nearly unanimous Congress to make a program with worthy goals much more effective and consequential in the lives of parents and children around the country.

Through all challenges and controversies, though, what strikes me as admirable about Dave is his deep and authentic humility. Informed by his faith and essential humanity, Dave has never expressed a sense of entitlement or arrogance. He has never sought a limelight. He is quick to share credit, and always willing to take responsibility. Throughout his 27 years on Capitol Hill, over and over again, his example has inspired not just fellow staffers, but House and Senate Members as well.

We have all profited from Dave's work here in Congress. His public service is in the finest tradition expected by our Founding Fathers. The Senate is a better place for his time here, and I wish him and his family well as he moves to new opportunities.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I wanted to take a moment to pay my respects to Dave Hoppe, whose last day in the Senate is today. Dave has been a friend and counselor to many of us in the Senate, and we will miss him.

It would be fair to say that Dave Hoppe has been the consummate Senate staffer. While a strong partisan, he has always been fair. He is decent. He is respectful and considerate of everyone with whom he comes in contact, and of the institution as a whole. He understands and practices the comity that is invaluable in the Senate.

When I look back on the service of Dave Hoppe, I see him as the still center of the maelstrom. While the chaos that is, on occasion, the Senate swirled and howled around him, he was calm; his voice never hurried, never rose. His counsel was sound, very sound; sometimes tinged with humor, good humor; never malicious or mean spirited. Always timely, always mindful of the institution, always aware of the possibilities and the consequences of its actions.

David knows that the Senate, immutable as it is, will go on even though he is no longer a part of its daily operations. However, those of us who have worked with him, and will continue to work with him, know the imprint he has left on the institution, the national policies he has helped shape, and the example he has set for all in the Senate to follow.

I join my colleagues in recognizing Dave Hoppe for his achievements and contributions to the Senate, and sending my best wishes to him and his family as they begin the next chapter of a remarkable life.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I have had the good fortune of knowing and working with Dave Hoppe for the last 9 years. He has been a vital part of this institution and he will be sorely

missed. I first had the opportunity to know him as chief of staff for Senator Dan Coats. Senator Coats unfortunately lost Dave when Dave moved over to be chief of staff for Senator LOTT's Republican conference secretary's office, then his majority whip office and then his majority leader's office.

I had the opportunity to work closely with Dave on an issue that we both feel passionately about: special education. After 2 years of failed negotiations, Dave Hoppe almost single-handedly managed to get this critical legislation authorized. The manner in which Dave approached this reauthorization and his ultimate success provides a wonderful example on why Dave was so successful in the Senate. He managed to bring Republicans and Democrats together by working in a straightforward, open, and honest manner which allowed Members to feel confident that their concerns were being thoroughly considered. Dave has served in both the majority and the minority—always representing his boss effectively, while also working to ensure that the Senate accomplished its work.

Dave is esteemed in the Senate for more than the passion and principles he brought to bear on issues. He is respected first and foremost for his character as a person and as a leader.

This is an institution that is built on trust. Dave is a person whose word is his bond. He has been so effective as the leader's chief of staff for precisely that reason. Members on both sides of the aisle always knew they could depend on the promises that he gave and relied on his word without reservation.

It is also remarkable that he wielded such enormous influence without any trace of pretension or pride. He was accessible to members and staff alike, serving with grace, good humor and sound counsel.

I will personally miss Dave. He ranks among those men and women of honor who have shaped the best qualities of the Senate. He made it a better institution through his service and his character, and we owe him our gratitude.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I may speak for up to 20 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIP TO EUROPE AND THE MIDEAST

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I have sought recognition to report on a trip I made to Europe and the Mideast from December 23 until January 7.

The information I found bears on the current problems of the Mideast peace process and the Israeli-Palestinian issues, but also on the opinions of a variety of the countries we visited on the

issue of Iraq and Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction. In Great Britain, in talking to executive branch officials, we heard there would be an effort made on the Mideast peace process to bring in the Palestinians in mid-January in advance of the Israeli elections in late January to try to keep the peace process stimulated.

We learned that in a recent trip which had been made by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who is married to a woman raised in England, and we heard obviously considerable talk about the Iraq issue.

Prime Minister Tony Blair has been one of the strongest allies of the United States and has stated his willingness to partner with the United States to see to it that Saddam does not maintain weapons of mass destruction regardless of what the United Nations does. We heard talk that Prime Minister Blair had taken credit for the United States going to the United Nations—or at least partial credit. And that was very well received by the British populous. But there remains a general feeling in Great Britain of opposition to a war against Iraq unless it is sanctioned by the United Nations.

We heard pretty much the same sentiment in Germany where we met with members of the Bundestag and officials in the executive branch, and with German and U.S. businessmen and women on the Chamber of Commerce there.

The situation in Germany is surprising to the extent that we heard repeated talk that it is politically incorrect to say, "I am proud to be a German." I found that surprising. It is a result of perhaps German instigation in two wars in the 20th century. In a country where we are so proud to be Americans, I found it surprising the people would not say, "I am proud to be a German." The Germans won't say that. Chancellor Schroder, we are told, referred to the "German way," and it drew criticism and the abandoning of that kind of expression. The sentiment in Germany seems to be pretty solidly against a war with Iraq. The members of the Bundestag with whom we met urged the U.S. to go back for a second resolution to authorize the use of force. I asked him if such a resolution was obtained would that make a difference to Germany on joining in. He said no it wouldn't; that there was a feeling of pacifism against war as a result of what happened in World War II and the predecessor war, and that the Germans were just opposed to it. Chancellor Schroder had problems within his own party when they changed party strength if he would deviate from the political position he took to win reelection—really running against, in effect, the United States and U.S. policy on taking action against Saddam Hussein.

In the Mideast we met with Egyptian President Mubarak who expressed great concern about what the reaction would be in the Mideast and in Arab countries to a war against Iraq. Presi-

dent Mubarak thought some countries would have trouble containing the people in the streets. He felt confident he could but was worried about other countries. He thought U.S. installations would be at risk where the Arab sentiments run so strongly against the United States.

In Syria, I had an extensive talk with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Foreign Minister al-Shara. The view there was that they are very much opposed to military action against Iraq. We noted that Syria had joined in the unanimous Security Council Resolution on 1441. But that, of course, fell short of the use of military force.

On January 6 I attended a session of the United States-Syrian dialog which had been initiated by the James Baker Institute last May in Houston, TX. There was an effort made to bring the Syrian and U.S. officials together to talk about problems of mutual concern. The principal area was the question of Syria playing host to terrorist organizations. I raised that issue in a meeting with President Assad and told him that if he wanted to get off the terrorist list there would have to be something done about that, the terrorist groups would have to leave Syria. He declined, saying that they were representatives of the Palestinians, and they were carrying out a political agenda and he would not ask them to depart from Damascus.

In the U.S.-Syrian dialog, and in talks with President Assad, we discussed the support of Syria and Iran for Hezbollah and the rockets which are pointed at the Israelis. I had conveyed to President Assad Prime Minister Sharon's willingness to meet with Syrian officials on a second peace track. When we met with Prime Minister Sharon in Israel, the subject came up of the possibility of Israeli-Syrian peace talks. And Prime Minister Sharon said he favors that. I asked him if he would mind if I passed that message on to President Assad, and he said: You are authorized to do that. President Assad responded that he thought peace talks would be a good idea. He said he would not want to finish them before the Israeli-Palestinian talks were concluded, but we talked about the negotiations which had been brokered by President Clinton in the mid-1990s where they came very close to a peace agreement between Prime Minister Rabin and President Hafez al-Assad.

Candidly, I do not expect things to blossom in that direction, but I do think it would be useful, always, to keep the conversations going and to see if peace could be attained.

Hearing the sentiments in Great Britain, in Germany, in Egypt and in Syria as to the general concerns about a military confrontation without explicit United Nations authorization, it is my hope that authorization will yet be obtained.

I thought the President's speech on Tuesday night was right on the mark, right on target, laid down the gauntlet

in a very clear way. It is a different world after September 11, when we learned a bitter lesson by not taking action against Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida after we had ample warning to do so.

We cannot ignore imminent threats. There is a basis in international law, as I said when we discussed the resolution authorizing the use of force, to take action, sanctified by international law where there is an imminent threat.

I was encouraged by President Bush's statement that he was going to send Secretary of State Powell back to the United Nations to produce specific evidence. I believe there is evidence to show that Saddam Hussein has not complied with Resolution 1441.

When there is all this talk about a smoking gun, I think that metaphor misses the point. You do not need a smoking gun to get a conviction. In fact, you do not even need a gun to get a conviction where you have other evidence. I believe the evidence is very strong, as Hans Blix and the other U.N. inspectors have said in their preliminary report, that Saddam has not accounted for the weapons of mass destruction which we knew he had when the U.N. inspectors were kicked out in December of 1998.

I believe there is other evidence. And the word is the decisions are now being made as to how much of that information can be transmitted to the United Nations without tipping Saddam off so he will move his weapons of mass destruction, which are mobile, or so that we will compromise sources and methods.

The media reported earlier this week that Britain was in support of a German plan to have a second interim report on February 14. If that does come about, it will give the U.N. inspectors a little additional time, perhaps, to act on additional information which Secretary of State Colin Powell can provide.

As I said on the floor of the Senate when we discussed the resolution for the authorization for the use of force, I think the hand of the United States would be much stronger if a second U.N. resolution is obtained. I believe there is a considerable body of evidence on the record at the present time to warrant a second United Nations resolution, which would authorize the use of force. But there is no doubt there is resistance from France and Germany.

I think the President is absolutely correct, we cannot allow our national interests and our national policy to be determined by anybody but the United States, and we cannot be subjected to a French veto.

It is my thinking that the French may be satisfied. If they are, I think the Russians will not veto nor will the Chinese, and we can move ahead for a second United Nations resolution.

The President has emphasized his hope to avoid a war. If the Iraqis and Saddam Hussein face a united United Nations, perhaps that is possible.

Back in January of 1990, Senator SHELBY and I had an opportunity to meet with Saddam Hussein for about an hour and a quarter. And although he is brutal—he has a record for using chemicals on his own people, the Kurds, in the Iran-Iraq war—and is vengeful, I think it may be accurate to say he is not suicidal. I believe that if he sees the noose around him, perhaps there is some opportunity he may step aside or that the military or others in Iraq may take action to dislodge him from a leadership position.

If war can be avoided, obviously, that is in the interests of everyone, to avoid putting our fighting forces in harm's way and to avoid casualties of the Iraqi civilian population and the Iraqi military population.

In essence, the trip to Europe and the Mideast showed me a state of substantial unrest. People are uneasy about a prospective war for many reasons. If the United Nations were to authorize it, I think that would allay a great many concerns and might even present the setting for deposing Saddam Hussein without the necessity of war.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that my report on foreign travel to Europe and the Middle East and op-ed pieces which I have published in the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* and the *Harisburg Patriot* be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

CODEL TRIP REPORT

In accordance with my custom of reporting on my foreign travel, this is a brief summary of my trip from December 23, 2002–January 7, 2003 to England, Lithuania, Germany, Israel, Egypt, and Syria.

ENGLAND

On December 24th, our first full day in London, in the company of Chargé Morton Dworkin, we met with William Ehrman, Director General of Defense and International Affairs, and Edward Chaplin, Director of Middle East Affairs, and former Ambassador to Jordan. We discussed the Israeli/Palestinian issues and the British position that it was preferable to follow the road map adopted by the so-called quartet which consisted of the United States, the UN, the EU, and Russia. Mr. Chaplin pointed out that Great Britain was holding a meeting in January with the Palestinians to try to move along the peace process in the interim before the Israeli elections scheduled for January. He expressed the opinion that Chairman Arafat should not be deposed because it will make him a martyr and strengthen him.

We discussed the efforts by Egyptian President Mubarak to persuade Hamas and Islam Jihad to accept a cease-fire. It was pointed out that Syrian President Bashar had been in England for several days visiting the parents of his wife who is British.

As to Iraq, our British hosts agreed that Saddam definitely had weapons of mass destruction and that he had not adequately explained what happened to such weapons after the UN inspectors had been ousted in 1998. It was noted that public opinion in Great Britain opposes military action against Saddam unless it is sanctioned by the UN and, even then, there are many dissenters. Prime Minister Tony Blair had taken credit for persuading President Bush to go to the UN for

Resolution 1441. It was further observed that sentiment in Great Britain favors another UN resolution authorizing force before a military confrontation occurs with Iraq.

On December 26th, we received another supplemental team briefing by Chargé Dworkin including an intelligence briefing.

LITHUANIA

We arrived at the Vilnius International Airport on the afternoon of Friday, December 27. We were greeted by Ambassador John Tefft, Marilyn Ereshefsky, and Randolph Flay of the United States Embassy. From the airport we drove to the U.S. Embassy for a Country Team briefing. During the drive from the airport, the Ambassador provided us with a brief background of the Country. He began his summary of Lithuania's history at the thirteenth century when it was the largest state of Central and Eastern Europe. In 1795 Lithuania was incorporated into the Russian Empire and remained that way until gaining their independence in 1918. In 1940 the country was occupied and annexed by the Soviet Union where it remained under Soviet control until 1990 when it again rejoined the community of free and democratic states after the fall of the Soviet Union.

Upon arrival at the embassy, Ambassador Tefft introduced us to his core team which included Marilyn Ereshefsky, the Section Chief, Randolph Flay, Political Officer, Michael Sessums, Economic Officer, Brent Barker, Attache, and Ruta Eluikis, Consul. Ambassador Tefft opened the meeting by informing us that we were visiting Lithuania at a special time in history as Lithuanians were still basking in the glow of the recent visit by President Bush and the acceptance into NATO and the European Union (EU). Ambassador Tefft recounted President Bush's very moving speech given in the heart of Vilnius where he said "an enemy of Lithuania is now an enemy of the United States."

I inquired about the attitude of the Russians toward Lithuanian acceptance into NATO and was informed that Russians were tolerant but not particularly happy about the expansion. Ambassador Tefft then commented to me that Lithuania had been independent in their past and very much wants to continue in that tradition as they look toward the future. However, there are still many remnants of the Soviet-era throughout the Country. For example, a Chernobyl-style nuclear power station is responsible for producing eighty percent of Lithuania's energy. As a condition of acceptance into the EU and after pressure from the international community, Lithuania has agreed to terminate the plant between 2005 and 2009.

Our conversation then turned to the economy. I was pleased to learn that the economy in Lithuania is undergoing a boom of sorts. Since independence, Lithuania has made substantial progress in economic reform. The GDP has risen from 5.9 percent in 2001 to 6.9 percent in 2002. According to the Ambassador, Lithuania is the only European country where the economy is significantly growing. He further advised that the majority of the EU economy is flat which poses large problems from Germany to the United Kingdom. Although unemployment in Lithuania is still a serious issue, it is not as bad as neighboring countries. The challenge now is to encourage a movement from agricultural jobs to more productive employment for many Lithuanians. Whereas twenty percent of the population is agricultural, these are mainly small family run farms and they account for only seven percent of the Gross Domestic Product. There is still considerable poverty in the rural areas.

Lithuania produces products for export for companies such as the furniture maker Ikea,

textiles for Oscar de la Renta, and cheese for many U.S. frozen food manufacturers. They also have a growing high-tech sector which produces software for such U.S. companies as Kemper Insurance. Consumer goods are also doing well. The biggest U.S. investors in Lithuania are Phillip Morris and Kraft foods. Currently, U.S. companies invest almost \$350 million in Lithuania each year. Where Lithuania has made great strides economically since gaining their independence in the early nineties, they still have major economic challenges ahead.

The discussion then moved to the population of Lithuania. Currently Lithuania has 3.7 million people living here. Largely, they are Roman Catholic. I inquired about the size of the Jewish population and was told there are currently about 5,000 Jews living in Lithuania. Lithuania's Jews can be traced back to the 13th century. By the 18th century, Vilnius had become the world capital of traditional—Talmudic, learning, often referred to as the Jerusalem of the North with over 250,000 Jews living in the Country. Tragically, 94 percent of the population, including 80,000 Jews living in Vilnius perished in the Holocaust, the highest percentage of genocide in Europe. Almost no Jewish cultural sites or homes of renowned Jewish personalities are remembered.

On Saturday, December 28th, we took a walking tour of the Old Town of the Lithuanian capital which is one of the largest in Eastern and Middle Europe. In the ancient part of Vilnius we could see the fusion of nature and architecture and the overlapping of cultures and traditions. Throughout Vilnius' history, inhabitants built synagogues, mosques, and Catholic churches next to one another.

Following our tour we proceeded to the Presidential Palace for a meeting with Valdas Adamkus, the President of Lithuania. President Adamkus, a former U.S. citizen and Administrator at the Environmental Protection Agency for the Great Lakes Region is in the middle of his second Presidential campaign. He faced 16 opponents in the general election on December 22 and now has a run-off which will take place on January 5th. Although President Adamkus was expected to win, his run-off opponent has made his age of 76 years an issue.

Our conversation then turned to Lithuania's acceptance into NATO and the Russian attitude toward expansion. President Adamkus said that Russia does not pose a significant threat to any of the Baltic countries and that President Vladimir Putin has become milder over the years. I asked about the mission of NATO now that the threat is gone. President Adamkus said that NATO provides an internal European security structure. Although he agreed with me that the role has changed, it is nonetheless important to all member countries including the United States.

Economically, the President said, NATO membership provides almost instant foreign investment increase. He is confident that an additional \$5 billion in revenue will come into Lithuania in the next three years and by the end of the decade Lithuania will look completely different. President Adamkus is determined to bring the standard of living up throughout the country. He feels there is still too much poverty, particularly in rural areas.

We then discussed the state of the current Judicial system. The President indicated that the country has significantly restructured the Judiciary in the past several years, particularly the past six months, but there is still a long way to go. He is proud of the fact that a large number of young, western educated Judges were recently sworn in but acknowledged that there are still many Judges

left over from the fifty years of the Soviet occupation. The Supreme Court however, is free from Judges from that era.

I then inquired about the position of Lithuania on Iraq and Saddam Hussein and where Lithuania would stand if it is proven that Iraq has reestablished a program of weapons of mass destruction. President Adamkus believes that it is inevitable that Hussein is lying and that Lithuania will stand by its allies and will be part of the overall effort if it comes to that point. President Adamkus then reminded me that Lithuania has been exchanging small groups of officers with the United States for training exercises. He then noted to me that the Pennsylvania National Guard recently sent seventy troops to Lithuania to perform a joint training missions with our troops.

After our meeting with the President, we departed for a meeting with Foreign Affairs Minister, Antana Valionis. Our conversation focused on Lithuania's invitation to join the NATO alliance at the recent summit in Prague and the European Commission report that included Lithuania on a list of ten countries expected to join the EU in 2004. Lithuania has made great strides, politically and economically, over the past decade and their invitation to join both NATO and the EU are a reflection of those efforts.

We discussed Lithuania's support for the War on Terrorism. They have deployed a 40-man Special Operations force to Afghanistan and have committed a medical support unit to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). It should be noted that Lithuania also contributed to operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo and currently have over fifty troops in the area. That evening I attended the opera Aida, at the Russian built Opera house. Following the Opera, I departed for the U.S. Marine Barracks to watch the Philadelphia Eagles play the New York Giants on the Armed Forces channel.

On the morning of Sunday, December 29th, we departed for a tour of Zydu, the Jewish section of Vilnius with our guide Yulik Gurvitch. This area was once a thriving spot for Jewish culture, but was desecrated by the Nazis occupation and later torn down by the Soviets. The area served as a prison camp for 60,000 Jews, of which most perished in the neighboring Paneriai forest. Vilnius was also home to the famed Yiddish Institute for Higher Learning and the Strashum Library which housed the world's largest collection of Yiddish-language books. It was known throughout the world for its thriving Yiddish-language theaters and libraries and schools and was coined the Jerusalem of the north.

I was pleased to learn of Lithuania's commitment to deal with its difficult past as it pertains to the Jewish faith. In 2002, the government returned hundreds of Torah scrolls to Jewish groups and announced its plan to restore and revitalize the Jewish Quarter. A program to educate its soldiers and students about the Holocaust is also in place. We departed Lithuania around mid-day bound for Germany.

GERMANY

On the afternoon of Sunday, December 29th, we arrived in Berlin, Germany and were met by Franz Seitz, our control officer at the U.S. Embassy. He notified us that former Senator Dan Coats, who now serves as Ambassador to Germany, was back home in the United States celebrating the birth of his grandchild. From the airport, we drove through Berlin toward our hotel. It was gratifying to see first-hand Berlin's progress since the infamous fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989. Berlin is a modern city embracing the 21st century while maintaining a sense of its rich history.

Monday morning, December 30th, we met with members of the Country Team at the U.S. Embassy including Terry Snell, the Deputy Chief of Mission, John Lister, Deputy Counselor for Political Affairs, and Franz Seitz. The briefing began with discussions of the poor state of relations between Germany and the United States which has reached its lowest level in decades. Relations between the two countries soured in September 2002 when, during the German election campaign, Mr. Schroeder repeatedly voiced his opposition to military action against Iraq—a position which angered the U.S. The Administration was also infuriated by comments from former German Justice Minister Herta Daeubler-Gmelin, who likened President Bush to Adolf Hitler. Although Chancellor Schroeder eventually apologized and fired the Justice Minister, the comment significantly strained the relationship between our two countries.

After the election took place, the German people were incensed to learn that the Chancellor had painted a false picture of the state of the German economy. He inflated the status of the fiscal situation of the Germany only to release data after the election indicating the deficit was significantly larger than previously indicated. In fact, they are facing a terrible recession and have the slowest economy in Europe.

I then questioned the team on anti-Semitism in Germany and was discouraged to hear that it is on the rise in certain areas particularly among young people. One argument for the increase in anti-Semitic attitudes among young people is the simple fact that because of the economy there are very few activities or jobs for youth in Germany. Right wing, anti-Semitic, anti-foreigner, anti-American groups host events for young teens and provide entertainment as well as a social setting while instilling these troubling ideas. These groups are also closely allied to the "skinhead" movement. The embassy also indicated that there is a rise in anti-Semitic contact in German media reports.

I then explored the idea of whether there was any concern that Germany could go back to the ways of World War I or II. The country team seemed confident that this could never happen because there is no political energy to increase the size or strength of the military or return to a militaristic society. I was further explained to me that Germans are morally horrified by what happened in this country during World War II and have a moral revulsion to much of their past. The Germans are making a conscientious effort to teach the holocaust in their text books and classrooms and are facing their history head on. They make no effort to hide the atrocities committed in the past.

The current German attitude was illustrated by the sentiment that in Germany today it is politically incorrect to make the statement that you are proud to be a German. The German people are well-aware of how they are perceived by the world for their actions of yesterday and are very cautious about perpetuating the idea that they are becoming too nationalistic or militaristic. For example, last year a cabinet minister almost lost his job for saying those words. Further, Chancellor Schroeder used the phrase "the German way" in a campaign statement last year and was so widely criticized he was forced to stop using the statement. It appears that because of Germans instigation of World War I and II that the most pervasive attitude in Germany is passivism.

After the country team briefing, we met with Wolfgang Bosbach, a member of the Bundestag, who is the Chair of the Domestic and Legal Affairs Committee and member of the Christian Democratic Union, the opposi-

tion party. Bosbach as been a vocal supporter of U.S. initiatives in the war of terrorism. Our discussion centered on U.S. German relations and the issue of Iraq. I asked him if the United Nations has a second resolution authorizing the use of force where will the Germans stand. He felt there would still be no change of opinion in Germany. For Schroeder, there is no way back, he was extremely vocal in his opposition to a war in Iraq throughout the campaign and he will not change course now. He continued on to say that the majority of Germans were also opposed to action in Afghanistan, but Schroeder was able to proceed there by calling for a vote of confidence on the coalition. He did feel, however, that Germany would be active in any reconstruction efforts in Iraq.

Bosbach felt that Schroeder made two critical mistakes in dealing with the United States. First, he said that the U.S. and Germany are friends and that friends don't speak publicly against one another in any circumstance. He felt that Schroeder handled the situation of his Justice Minister's comments very poorly. Secondly, he felt that Schroeder should have never come out publicly against action in Iraq without having had a private conversation with President Bush first.

As a member of the opposition party, Mr. Bosbach is convinced that the German government hasn't done enough in the war on terror. As an example, he believes that in Germany, if the government has adequate proof that an individual belongs to a terrorist organization, they should automatically lose their citizenship. Germans cannot expel or deport anybody and with German citizenship, an individual can pass freely into many countries. Last year alone Germany issued three hundred and forty thousand visas to individuals from rogue states. Mr. Bosbach believes there is a network of terrorists in Germany as three of the September 11th pilots had lived in Germany.

After our meeting with Mr. Bosbach, we headed for a luncheon hosted by the Berlin chapter of the American Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber members in attendance were both Germans and Americans. I was interested to learn that there are over two thousand American Companies in Germany which have invested one hundred billion dollars and employ over eight hundred thousand people.

I inquired about the overall attitude of the group regarding the U.S.-German relationship. There was widespread agreement that the members were disappointed about the position the German government took during the election. As one member put it, the relationship which took fifty years to rebuild was destroyed in five seconds. However, many in the group felt that a majority of Germans are not anti-American. When I asked if they thought Germany would go along with a United Nations resolution against Iraq if there was sufficient proof that Saddam is lying, it was clear nobody thought the government would support action in Iraq.

I expressed surprise that the economy was in the difficult situation it is today as I have always had a great respect for German ingenuity, efficiency, and technology. Many of the group were keenly interested in how the international situation and the relationship of our two countries was going to affect future business and trade. I believe that business people still want to do business regardless of any comments made by Chancellor Schroeder.

In the afternoon, we arrived at the German Federal Ministry of the Interior for a meeting with Reinhardt Peters the Minister-Director in the Police Bureau. Mr. Peters informed me that he is responsible for coordinating police responses to major crime including terrorism, and plays a key role in cooperative law enforcement efforts within the EU and with other nations. He is also involved with Germany's lead-nation role in building an Afghan national police force. We discussed such subjects as the death penalty, which Germany does not have and how the Germans are prepared to deal with terrorism.

Following the Ministry of Interior meeting we proceeded to the Federal Ministry of Justice for a meeting with Minister-Director for Criminal Law, Christian Lehmann. Earlier this month, the German government agreed to provide evidence requested by the U.S. pertaining to suspected "20th hijacker" Zacarias Moussaoui. Germany had initially refused to provide the evidence, arguing that its constitution forbids providing evidence that could lead to enforcement of a death sentence. The U.S. Justice Department agreed to use the evidence only during the guilt determination portion of the trial, and not the sentencing portion of the trial. Given its original reluctance in the Moussaoui case, it is not clear how much cooperation Germany is providing in other terrorist investigations relating to September 11th and any other al-Qaeda investigation. Germany is currently prosecuting Mounir el-Motassadeq for his alleged involvement with the Hamburg terrorist cell connected with the September 11th attacks, having charged him with "aiding and abetting" the murder of the over thousand victims of September 11th.

The following day we had the opportunity to attend a lunch meeting at the offices of the American Jewish Committee (AJC). Lunch was hosted by the managing director, Deidre Berger and Greg Caplan, the assistant director of the AJC in Berlin. Our discussion primarily focused on the attitudes of Germans toward Jews. They were encouraging on many fronts. First, they were confident that the majority of young people are interested in maintaining memory of the holocaust and lessons of their dark past are widely taught in German schools today. Further, the AJC commended the German government for their willingness to teach about racism and tolerance and their cooperation with the AJC on this front. Less positive however, were the results from their recent survey indicating that negative attitudes toward Jews are widespread in German society today. Sixty percent of Germans acknowledge that anti-Semitism is currently a problem in Germany according to the survey.

Keeping with the theme of the day, we headed to the Jewish Museum which had an exhibit of 2000 years of German-Jewish history. On New Years Day, 2003, we departed Berlin for Israel.

ISRAEL

Thursday, January 2nd provided us the chance to meet with representatives of the Palestinian Authority and Israeli leaders. In the morning we met with United States Ambassador Daniel Kurtzer, and Salam Fayyad, the new Minister of Finance for the Palestinian National Authority. Mr. Fayyad was certainly a breath of fresh air in the Palestinian Authority. Mr. Fayyad, who was raised in the West Bank has worked with the International Monetary Fund and the Federal Reserve in St. Louis. He received his Ph.D in Texas and has spent time living in Washington, DC.

At the time of our meeting, he had just submitted the 2003 Palestinian Budget pro-

posal. This is the first publicly disclosed budget of the Palestinian Authority. He identified significant reforms that he has instituted. First, he has centralized the Treasury. This means that all revenues will now be going directly to the department of the Treasury. Prior to his reform, Palestinian finances went into many different accounts with no centralized control. This enabled monies to be used for such purposes as arms purchases and terrorism financing. Second, Mr. Fayyad took control of public hiring. In the past, there was no management of the public payroll. There were literally hundreds of people within the system who could hire government employees. This encouraged corruption and patronage leading to more violence. Now, under Mr. Fayyad, no additions to the payroll can be made without the express permission of the Ministry of Finance. He also took control of the internal auditing system.

I then met with Foreign Minister Netanyahu and we discussed a number of subjects including the peace process, Iraq, and the issue of the prosecution of criminals for terrorist acts committed against Americans abroad. I expressed an interest to extradite to the United States terrorists whom we know are responsible for the death of Americans. I provided the Foreign Minister with a list of several known assassins, some of which were either currently in Israeli prisons or whom Israel had adequate knowledge of their whereabouts. I encouraged the Israelis to work with the United States Justice Department in prosecuting these terrorists.

During a lunch meeting with Saeb Erakat, we discussed Chairman Yasser Arafat's leadership abilities and my opinion of the need for the Chairman to step aside. I told him I thought it unrealistic to rely upon Chairman Arafat in the peace process because of the evidence implicating him in terrorism. It had been established that he knew about the shipment of arms from Iran early last year and his handwriting was on documents funding terrorism. I raised the possibility that Chairman Arafat might be regulated to a titular position. Mr. Erakat said that he believes there is no other alternative to Chairman Arafat and that he was working to promote peace and he even gave a recent speech calling for a cease fire. He then went on to say that Chairman Arafat was one of the first leaders to call for a dialogue. Mr. Erakat stated that there is no trust on either side and that under those circumstances it will be almost impossible to begin the process of a recovery.

When I asked if he thought there was a chance for the suicide bombings to stop, he said he hoped it was possible, but it will be very difficult because all a person needs is a "mind-void of hope" and two hundred dollars to bring about terror. He said that the circumstance on the ground in the Palestinian territories was hopeless for so many.

I then went on to meet with the Israeli Attorney General, Elyakim Rubenstein. I further probed the topic of extradition of terrorists accused of killing Americans in Israel and further solicited the cooperation of the Israeli Government in an effort that would support a U.S. prosecution of these terrorists. I noted that I had spoken with Foreign Minister Netanyahu regarding this issue and provided him with a list of suspects. He said that he generally agreed with this idea and pledged full cooperation and willingness to work with the U.S. Justice Department. We acknowledged that it is a high priority for both of our governments to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice. I responded that I recognize Israel's sovereign right to prosecute terrorists who attack and murder its citizens, but pointed out that there is a

valid role for the U.S. Government to play when Americans are killed.

Following my meeting in Jerusalem with the Attorney General, I proceeded to Tel Aviv to meet with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon where we discussed a wide range of topics including Palestinian terrorism, Israeli military response, Iraq, and Yasser Arafat. Prime Minister Sharon complained about the ten thousand Hizballah rockets in Lebanon which are pointed toward Israel. He said Damascus was the center and headquarters for the most radical terrorist groups and said they should immediately be dismantled. In context of his focus on Syria, I then asked the Prime Minister if he would be willing to go to Syria to discuss this. He said he was interested in going to Damascus and would be willing to sit down at the negotiating table with President Bashar al-Assad of Syria so long as there were no preconditions. I asked if he would object if I conveyed that message to President Assad when I was in Damascus and he said no.

I then went on to meet with former Prime Minister Ehud Barak at his private office in Tel Aviv. Mr. Barak was in good spirits and we had a conversation covering many subjects including the peace process, Lebanon, Iran, and Iraq. Mr. Barak indicated that he supported the efforts the Bush Administration is making toward trying to achieve a lasting peace in the area and believes it represents a very good opportunity. We also discussed the effort that Prime Minister Tony Blair was making by meeting with President Assad and others in the region.

Our final meeting of the day was with former Prime Minister Shimon Peres. My first observation was that he didn't age. I asked him about this and he advised me that his philosophy of life keeps him young—he is an optimist. Our meeting was brief as the hour was late and he had another appointment that day. We spoke about Chairman Arafat and the possibility of his moving into a position of less power within the Palestinian Authority. He doubted that would happen.

We then discussed his approach to peace discussions. He believes the process should move forward in several directions at once, as opposed to the widely discussed strategy of achieving individual milestones. He compared it to sending a fleet out instead of a train. On the topic of Syria, Mr. Peres did not discount the idea of peace negotiations, but expressed his feeling that Israel should not lose sight of the Palestinian issue, the matter of prime importance.

EGYPT

We arrived at Cairo International Airport on Friday, January 3rd where we were met by our control officer Steven Bondy. From the airport we immediately went to tour the impressive Egyptian Museum where we toured King Tut's tomb and other historical artifacts.

Following the Museum, we went to the U.S. embassy where I had the opportunity sit down with a group of Egyptian reporters for a roundtable discussion of current affairs.

I then proceeded to the Foreign Ministry for a meeting with Minister Ahmed Maher and U.S. Ambassador David Welch. We discussed my upcoming trip to Damascus for the U.S.-Syrian dialogue. Mr. Maher encouraged my participation and expressed praise for the initiative by the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University. We discussed Syria in some detail afterward and Mr. Maher's support for President Assad. We then discussed the issue of violence in the Palestinian territories and Mr. Maher expressed his disappointment and view that seemingly everyday there is another "incursion" by Israeli forces. On the

upside, he noted that there were forces on both sides amenable to change.

The following day we flew to Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt to meet with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. As usual, President Mubarak was a gracious host. We met in his private office and then were invited to join him for brunch. We discussed his recent visit by Prime Minister Tony Blair and his view on prospects for peace. President Mubarak noted that the world has changed very much since our first visit with one another in 1982 but one thing that hasn't changed is that he is still willing to answer any question. I asked him if he thought it was possible for the violence to stop and he said he continued to work for a "cease-fire" by all parties. He indicated that he is willing to do whatever he can to help, but that the United States has to be in the center of any deal that is worked out. He said the same was true for a Syrian-Israeli deal as well. We went on to discuss Iran and Iraq and their individual relationships with the United States and Egypt and the reaction of the Egyptian people if President Bush returns to the United Nations for another resolution. He said there was great concern in the Arab world about a war with Iraq. He indicated that there would likely be protests in the street and although he could handle that in Egypt it would be difficult for other Arab leaders. President Mubarak commented that the war with Iraq will have a negative effect on the Egyptian economy and the economics in the region generally.

Finally, on the local Pennsylvania scene, I urged President Mubarak to finalize a \$100 million deal with Norfolk Southern, which has agreed to rehabilitate 100 Egyptian locomotives. Norfolk Southern is still negotiating the terms of the contract, but it is my hope that the deal can be worked quickly. President Mubarak responded that if the funding was in the pipeline from USAID it would be completed. I offered my thanks to President Mubarak for Egyptian support for the war on terrorism.

SYRIA

On Saturday, January 3rd, we left Egypt and arrived in Damascus, Syria where we were met by Ambassador Theodore H. Kattouf and our Control Officer, Jen Rasamimanana. Ambassador Kattouf is a native of Altoona, Pennsylvania and a graduate of Pennsylvania State University. After attaining the rank of Captain in the United States Army, he began a distinguished career in the foreign service including assignments in Kuwait, Tunis, Beirut, and Baghdad.

The following morning I met with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. President Assad has been meeting with many of my House and senate colleagues in recent months and I complimented him for his willingness to have a dialogue with the different groups. I told him how useful I think it is for Members to have these meetings and how useful I thought it could be for him.

We discussed my trip to Israel and my meeting with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon where he indicated his willingness to discuss peace. President Assad said anytime is a good time for peace, but that he believes the United States needs to be involved in any negotiations. I asked him if he thought negotiations could take place prior to an Israeli-Palestinian negotiation. He commented that he thought negotiations could get started, but likely no agreement could occur until the Palestinian issue is resolved. I told President Assad that the U.S. remains committed to resolving the conflict.

I then raised the issue which has been brought up by Prime Minister Sharon in Israel regarding terror organizations resid-

ing in Syria. I asked that his country work to eliminate groups with Syria's borders who continue to fan the fire in the region. President Assad asserted that these groups, including Hizballah and Hamas, do not conduct terrorist operations out of Syria and that they represent thousands of Palestinians whom he would have to dislocate. He said he was unwilling to do so. I responded that if Syria wanted to be removed from the U.S. terrorist list, Syria would have to oust those terrorist groups from Syria and end support for Hizballah.

With regard to Israel we also discussed Prime Minister Sharon's complaint that Syria controlled over ten thousands Katyusha rockets, which were pointed toward Israel. President Assad said these would not be used against the Israeli people.

President Assad emphasized Syria's desire to be removed from the U.S. Department of State's list of state sponsors of terrorism and his unhappiness about the Syrian Accountability Act which was introduced in the last Congress and signed by over 45 of my colleagues. I told President Assad if the terrorist groups were to leave Syria, it would go a long way toward their legislative goals in the United States.

I commended President Assad on Syria's willingness to support renewed weapons inspections in Iraq and sanctions aimed at disallowing that country's re-armament, which are steps in the right direction. I asked that Syria continue to cooperate with the U.S. against al-Qaeda.

I raised with President Assad the issue of an American, Mrs. Liz Henry Murad of New York, who has requested assistance in locating her children who are believed to be in Damascus. Her children were forcibly kidnapped by their father, Mr. Ruwayn Murad, and reportedly taken to Syria. After alerting President Assad, Foreign Minister Farouk al-Shara, and Rustom al-Zoubi, Syrian Ambassador to the United States, of this abduction in separate letters dated February 8, 2002, I raised the case with President Assad personally during my previous visit to Damascus in March 2002. Then, on April 4, 2002, I wrote to President Assad and Major General Ali Hourri, the Syrian Minister of Interior, requesting that Syrian officials pursue a Lebanese warrant for Mr. Murad. In this meeting with President Assad, he indicated he was willing to work with the Lebanese Government to resolve this case.

I also asked President Assad about Guy Hever, a missing Israeli soldier, who is believed by his family to be a prisoner in a Syrian jail. Mr. Hever was last seen on the Golan Heights near the Syrian border on August 17, 1997. I met with the mother of Mr. Hever in my Washington, DC office on November 6, 2002 to hear of her son's mysterious disappearance. Thereafter, I wrote to President Assad asking him to order an inquiry into Mr. Hever's whereabouts and pursued the subject in our meeting. President Assad said he would have the matter investigated.

We spent most of the day Monday, January 6th at a U.S.-Syrian dialogue, which was a continuation of the event that took place last May at the Baker Institute at Rice University in Texas. The event was attended by many experts on U.S.-Syrian relations including former U.S. ambassador Edward P. Djerejian, former Ambassador Richard Murphy, Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Walid al-Moualem, Buthayna Shaaban, head of the Foreign Ministry's foreign media and public relations department, Riad Ismet, director of the state radio and television service, and Mohammad Aziz Shukri, a professor of international law at state-run Damascus University.

The dialog focused on Iraq as well as the Israeli/Palestinian issues. The Syrian inter-

locutors were adamant in opposition to war against Iraq although they condemned Saddam Hussein's conduct. The Syrians welcomed my opinion, even though I emphasized it was President Bush's ultimate decision, that the U.S. should return to the UN for another resolution supporting the use of force before acting.

Notwithstanding the heated comments and diverse points of view, the exchanges were constructive. The Syrians left with a better understanding of our revulsion to suicide bombings targeting civilians after our own experience of 9/11. Both sides agreed that the killing of Israeli and Palestinian non-combatants had to be stopped. The only real agreement came on the utility of "dialogue" even in the absence of any agreement on any proposed solution.

With the opportunity presented by a new young, British educated President in Damascus, we should accelerate our efforts to improve U.S./Syrian relations, persuade the Syrians on our views on terrorism and strive for an Israeli/Syrian Peace Treaty.

We left Syria on the afternoon of January 6th, made an overnight stop in London to change planes, and headed back to Washington, DC on January 7th to begin a new session of Congress.

[From the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Jan. 15, 2003]

A TOUR THROUGH EUROPE AND THE MIDEAST REVEALS THE LACK OF ENTHUSIASM FOR A U.S. MILITARY ATTACK ON IRAQ

My ten-day fact finding visit to Europe and the Mid-East in late December and early January found little support for a U.S. war against Iraq. The Germans were outspoken in opposition. British Prime Minister Tony Blair, personally a strong supporter of President Bush, appeared to be a leader without many followers on this issue.

The strongest opposition and most dire warnings came from nations in the Mid-East with the exception of Israel. Egypt's President Mubarak, a solid U.S. ally for more than two decades, predicted violence against U.S. interests in the region if Iraq is attacked. U.S. Embassy personnel in Syria are on alert to evacuate in advance of any war.

Recollections are still fresh on the Syrian mob which ransacked our Ambassador's residence in Damascus in December 1998 following a U.S. missile attack on Bagdad. Ambassador Ryan Crocker's wife was rescued just before the mob threatened to break through the steel door in the so-called "safe haven". The bricks and mortar of the residence have been repaired, but the psychological damage lingers on.

I was in Damascus on that night in December 1998 when that attack occurred and was awakened at 2 A.M. to watch CNN's coverage of the missiles striking Bagdad. Leaving Syria on schedule at 6:30 that morning, I then traveled to Egypt and Jordan and heard strong Arab protests on the U.S. military action which was minuscule compared to what is now planned.

On January 6th in Damascus, the "US/Syrian Dialogue", a forum initiated by the Baker Public Policy Institute in Houston last May, focused on Iraq as well as the Israeli/Palestinian issues. The Syrian interlocutors were adamant in opposition to war against Iraq although they condemned Saddam Hussein's conduct. The Syrians welcomed my opinion, even though I emphasized it was President Bush's ultimate decision, that the U.S. should return to the UN for another resolution supporting the use of force before acting.

In a separate meeting, President Bashar al-Assad and Foreign Minister Shara complained to me about the UN's refusal to give all members of the Security Council the full

12,000 pages turned over by Iraq after Syria and all the other 14 nations had voted unanimously for Iraq to comply with its obligation to disarm. I agreed that all member nations, which are asked to vote for sanctions including UN military action, are entitled to all the Iraqi documents and whatever data the U.S. can supply establishing Iraq's non-compliance.

While the Syrians strongly favored a second UN resolution, they left no doubt they would not join in any UN military action as they had in 1991. They emphasized their 1991 joinder was based on Iraq's attack of Kuwait, another Arab nation, which was not present now.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's opposition to war against Iraq was echoed in our January 2nd meeting with Wolfgang Busbach, a member of the Bundestag. He explained that his country's experience in two 21st century wars had made Germans irreversibly pacifists. Even though he persisted in asserting Germany would not participate in military action even if the UN voted for it, he hoped the U.S. would seek another resolution before acting.

I was surprised to hear so much sentiment that it was politically incorrect for Germans to express pride in being German. Chancellor Schroeder was criticized for referring to the "German Way" in their recent election and stopped using that phrase. That attitude indicates Germany's reluctance to participate in any military action which might revive international sentiment against German nationalism.

These meetings confirmed my strong sense that the U.S. position would be greatly strengthened by a second UN resolution. UN Inspector Hans Blix has already noted Iraq is in default in not explaining what happened to the weapons of mass destruction which it had in 1998 before the UN was ousted. Perhaps the U.S. will be able to bolster the case showing Saddam's falsification from testimony from Iraq's scientists or evidence from U.S. intelligence sources which can be disclosed without compromising sources or methods.

The final determinant on whether there will be war may be the vague and unpredictable state of Saddam's mind. Is he suicidal?

While the evidence is overwhelming on his venality and brutality, my 75 minute meeting with him in January 1990 persuaded me he was not a madman. Saddam has surprised many by submitting to UN inspections, even opening up his palaces, apologizing to Kuwait and making his scientists available for interrogation. Perhaps he has a surprise ending in mind.

[From the Patriot-News, Jan. 21, 2003]

YOUNG SYRIAN COULD PROVIDE MIDEAST HOPE

A suicide bombing at a Tel Aviv bus terminal murdering 23 more civilians on January 5th cast a pall over discussions on the Mid-East peace process which I had last week with Prime Minister Sharon in Israel, President Mubarak in Egypt and President Assad in Syria.

In Israel, Prime Minister Sharon insisted that negotiations could not be conducted with Chairman Arafat because of his proved complicity in supporting Palestinian terrorists. When I suggested to Sa'ab-Erekat, Arafat's chief negotiator, that the Chairman step aside to a titular position without power, Erekat responded that Arafat was determined to stay on as the duly elected leader. Egypt's President Mubarak and Syrian President Bashar al Assad agreed there was no one else on the scene to speak for the Palestinians although neither would vouch for Arafat's word or his non-involvement in terrorism.

So, the stalemate continues with no sign of the tunnel let alone a light at the end of the

tunnel. The Arabs, who vociferously argue that Prime Minister Sharon does not want peace, must know that this January suicide bombing strengthens his appeal in elections scheduled for later this month. Those who oppose peace, while perhaps not more numerous, appear to be more effective than those who favor peace.

Our Mid-East visits did produce some bright spots. The new Palestinian Finance Minister offers real hope that transparency may be forthcoming and corruption may be restrained. A University of Texas Ph.D. in economics and a former official at both the IMF and the Federal Revenue, Salam Fayyad, a native Palestinian, returned to his homeland after living in the U.S. from 1987 to 1995. In our meeting at the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem, Minister Fayyad outlined impressive reforms: (1) requiring all revenues to be paid to the Ministry of Finance eliminating the potential for diversion for corruption or terrorism; (2) consolidating all hiring in his department to eliminate patronage and kickbacks; and (3) activating both internal and external audits. His just released January 2003 budget was the first public budget in the history of the Palestinian Authority.

If corruption and violence could be eliminated, or at least curtailed, the stage could be set for resumption of contributions by the donor nations to rebuild the Palestinian Authority infrastructure and compensate Israel for its losses. In a relaxed setting in the resort town of Sharm el-Sheik, President Mubarak reiterated his longstanding efforts to broker a "cease fire". With Hamas and Islam Jihad continuing to claim credit for suicide bombings and evidence linking Chairman Arafat personally to supporting terrorists, such a "cease fire" appears remote, but worth the continuing effort.

After Prime Minister Sharon denounced Syria's harboring terrorist organizations in Damascus and supporting Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, I asked him if he would be willing to enter into peace negotiations with Syria as Prime Minister Rabin had in the mid-1990s which were brokered by President Clinton. He said he would providing there were no pre-conditions and asked me to convey that offer to President Assad which I did three days later in Damascus.

President Assad said he was willing to open peace talks with Israel. He said he did not think it appropriate to conclude a treaty before Israel and the Palestinian Authority had reached a final settlement, but that Syrian/Israeli talks could proceed on separate tracks. I do not expect Syria and Israel to immediately activate such discussions, but the reactions were more positive than I heard in many visits to Damascus and Jerusalem a decade earlier.

I then asked President Assad about Hezbollah and terrorist organizations in Damascus both in terms of Prime Minister Sharon's complaints and Syria being on the U.S. terrorist list. He responded that the organizations in Damascus were not involved in terrorism in Israel, but represented thousands of Palestinians who lived in Syria. As to Hezbollah, President Assad insisted that the Lebanese/Israeli border had been quiet, except for one or two skirmishes, since April 1986 when Secretary of State Warren Christopher worked out an agreement between the parties.

Notwithstanding those responses, I urged him to do more to satisfy the demands of our State Department for Syria's removal from the terrorist list. I remind him that the Syrian Accountability Act in the 107th Congress had obtained 35 co-sponsors in the Senate which represented real concern on the terrorism issue even though opposed by the Bush Administration. Should it become law,

it would probably cause a downgrading of relations even to the possible extent of withdrawing ambassadors.

At the conclusion of my trip, I attended the opening of the second U.S./Syrian Dialogue on January 6th in Damascus. The first "Dialogue" was held last May in Houston under the co-sponsorship of the Government of Syria and the James Baker Institute of Public Policy. The "Dialogue" focused on the Israeli/Palestinian controversies and Iraq. Notwithstanding the heated comments and diverse points of view, the exchanges were constructive. The Syrians left with a better understanding of our revulsion to suicide bombings targeting civilians after our own experience of 9/11. Both sides agreed that the killing of Israeli and Palestinian non-combatants had to be stopped. The only real agreement came on the utility of "dialogue" even in the absence of any agreement on any proposed solution.

With the opportunity presented by a new young, British educated President in Damascus, we should accelerate our efforts to improve U.S./Syrian relations, persuade the Syrians on our views on terrorism and strive for an Israeli/Syrian Peace Treaty.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, in the absence of any other Senator seeking recognition, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BUNNING). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mr. DURBIN pertaining to the introduction of S. 250 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—NOMINATION

Mr. SUNUNU. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 2:30 today, the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of the England nomination, as under the previous order; provided further that the vote occur on the confirmation of the nomination at 2:50 today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SUNUNU. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended until the hour of 2:30 p.m., with the time equally divided between the majority and minority leaders or their designees, with Members permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Vermont is recognized.