

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.