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CRISIS IN SYRIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR HOMELAND SECURITY

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

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CRISIS IN SYRIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR HOMELAND SECURITY

Tuesday, September 10, 2013

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:08 a.m., in Room 311, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Michael T. McCaul [Chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives McCaul, Smith, King, Miller, Meehan, Duncan, Marino, Barletta, Stewart, Hudson, Daines, Brooks, Perry, Sanford, Thompson, Jackson Lee, Clarke, Higgins, Richmond, Payne, O'Rourke, Gabbard, Vela, and Horsford.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Committee on Homeland Security will come to order.

The committee is meeting today to examine the crisis in Syria and the implications for the homeland. The Chairman wishes to remind our guests today that demonstrations from the audience, including the use of signs, placards, and T-shirts, as well as verbal outbursts, are a violation of the Rules of the House and will result in a removal from the hearing room. I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

For 2 years, Americans have known a brutal war is being waged in Syria. The atrocities witnessed almost a month ago shocked the world and have demanded tough choices from the United States. However, horrific acts should not spur unwise reactions, and we must thoroughly examine the realities of military intervention in a civil war. Today we gather to examine both the Assad regime and the opposition forces that are caught in a bloody civil war. Specifically, we will look at what role America might play in this deadly conflict and what a military strike against Syria could mean for our National and Homeland Security.

Yesterday, Syrian President Assad said the United States should expect everything in response to military strikes in Syria, and last week the United States intercepted an order from Iran to militants in Iraq to attack the U.S. embassy in Iraq and other American interests. On the same day, the FBI warned the possibility of U.S. military action could escalate cyber attacks by pro-Syrian or other aligned actors.

Ultimately, the United States must weigh the ripple effects of its actions. Many Members of Congress have made the point that America's credibility is on the line, while others have maintained that the administration's wavering response to Assad's brutal tac-

tics over the past year cannot be fixed with an unbelievably small military action, as Secretary Kerry described the strikes yesterday.

What America must determine is what its support for either side means and the consequences for the United States. An unbelievably small intervention as described by the Secretary could elicit an unbelievably damaging chain of events for the United States.

Make no mistake, punishing Assad is a noble mission. Based on the briefings we have received, it is conclusive that he used chemical weapons against his own people. But damaging the regime's command and control posts will have the effect of helping the rebels. The Assad regime's decades of oppression have undoubtedly brought this revolution, but the moderate resistance has been infiltrated with some of the fiercest Islamist fighters in the world.

Our country strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons. They are some of the most egregious methods of warfare known to mankind. The Assad regime has used them for many months and has killed many innocent people. Americans have great compassion for the victims. However, as we look at the Syrian crisis, we must be realistic and take into account the fact that the resistance movement is now dominated in some regions by a host of Islamist extremist factions such as al-Nusra, an al-Qaeda affiliate. While the administration contends that we can support the rebels and differentiate between the moderate and extremist wings, the reality is that they are now working together. Any U.S. military strike against the Assad regime will also benefit the extremists fighting him, who will undoubtedly use Assad's weapons against American allies and interests and possibly even our homeland if given the chance.

This is all put in unique focus as we observe this week both the anniversaries of the attacks in Benghazi and those on September 11, 2001. Al-Qaeda perpetrated both attacks, and there is serious concern that if Assad falls, the extremist wings of the rebel movement will fill the vacuum and take over Assad's arsenal of chemical weapons. Sadly, in places like Libya and Egypt, we have seen that dictators are rarely replaced by moderates.

This fact is why my main concern has been and remains the security of Assad's chemical weapon stockpiles. We have known of his growing arsenal for decades, and the President's strike plan will not secure them. Securing these weapons will take an international coalition that will ensure they can neither be used by Assad or the extremist elements of the rebel forces.

Since the strikes will not accomplish this goal and could draw our country into a prolonged and major conflict, I remain concerned about the President's widely-telegraphed plan. Today I hope we can discuss the ripple effects of our action or inaction in the Syrian conflict, and I appreciate the witnesses for sharing their expertise here today.

After years of indecision, the President has sent this decision to Congress, and our deliberation will help shape the way forward.

With that, the Chairman now recognizes the Ranking Member for his opening statement.

[The statement of Chairman McCaul follows:]

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MICHAEL T. MCCAUL

SEPTEMBER 10, 2013

For 2 years, Americans have known that a brutal war is being waged in Syria. The atrocities witnessed almost a month ago shocked the world—and have demanded tough choices from the United States. However, horrific acts should not spur unwise reactions, and we must thoroughly examine the realities of military intervention in this civil war.

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Ultimately, the United States must weigh the ripple effects of its actions. Many Members of Congress have made the point that America's credibility is on the line, while others have maintained that the administration's wavering response to Assad's brutal tactics over the past year cannot be fixed with an "unbelievably small" military action, as Secretary Kerry described the strikes yesterday.

What America must determine is what its support for either side means, and the consequences for the United States. An "unbelievably small" intervention, as described by the Secretary, could elicit an unbelievably damaging chain of events for the United States.

Make no mistake, punishing Assad is a noble mission. Based on the briefings we have received, it is conclusive that he used chemical weapons against his own people. But damaging the Regime's command-and-control posts will have the effect of helping the Rebels. The Assad Regime's decades of repression have undoubtedly wrought this revolution, but the moderate resistance has been infiltrated with some of the fiercest Islamist fighters in the world.

Our country strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons. They are some of the most egregious methods of warfare known to mankind. The Assad Regime has used them for many months, and has killed many innocent people. Americans have great compassion for the victims, however as we look at the Syrian crisis, we must be realistic and take into account the fact that the resistance movement is now dominated—in some regions—by a host of Islamist extremist factions such as al Nusra, an al-Qaeda affiliate.

While the administration contends that we can support the rebels, and differentiate between the moderate and extremist wings, the reality is that they are now working together. Any U.S. military strikes against the Assad Regime will also benefit the extremists fighting him who will undoubtedly use Assad's weapons against American allies and interests and possibly even our homeland if given the chance.

This is all put in unique focus as we observe this week both the anniversaries of the attacks in Benghazi, and those on September 11, 2001. Al-Qaeda perpetrated both attacks, and there is serious concern that if Assad falls, the extremist wings of the rebel movement will fill the vacuum and take over Assad's arsenal of chemical weapons. Sadly, in places like Libya and Egypt, we have seen that dictators are rarely replaced by moderates.

This fact is why my main concern has been, and remains, the security of Assad's chemical weapon stockpiles. We have known of his growing arsenal for decades—and the President's strike plan will not secure them. Securing these weapons will take an international coalition, and will ensure that they can neither be used by Assad or the extremist elements of the rebel forces.

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Today, I hope we can discuss the ripple effects of our action or inaction in the Syrian conflict, and I appreciate the witnesses for sharing their expertise. After years of indecision, the President has sent this decision to Congress, and our deliberation will help shape the way forward.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for holding today's hearing.

I also want to thank the witnesses for appearing here today.

I agreed not to object to the Chairman's motion to seek unanimous consent to convene this hearing without the required 7-day notice. I agreed to this unusual request because of the subject matter of this hearing and the need for this panel to fulfill its unique jurisdictional mission in assuring that the American people know about the potential homeland security implications of the United States military intervention in Syria.

But before we discuss the homeland security implications, we should begin with the basic facts: The current civil war in Syria began 3 years ago as a popular uprising against the Assad regime. The popular uprising has developed into an armed rebellion and may now be considered a civil war. In the last 3 years, over 100,000 Syrians have been killed; more than 2 million people have fled Syria; and 4 million have been forced to flee from their homes but remain in Syria. The United States has provided approximately $1 billion in humanitarian assistance.

Also, in the last 3 years, Israel has used missile attacks to the Assad regime on three separate occasions. The Syrian Government has used chemical weapons in small-scale attacks on several occasions. Iran and Hezbollah have lent their support to the Assad regime and the opposition forces have grown to include al-Qaeda affiliates or associates.

Long-standing religious and regional divisions fuel this complicated conflict. Neither the United Nations nor the traditional allies have agreed to use military force to intervene. As these facts demonstrate, the situation in Syria is tragic.

Mr. Chairman, there is no doubt that this House will have a robust debate about whether the United States should pursue military action in Syria. However, in this committee, we must try to provide an understanding of the possible homeland security implications of military action because understanding the potential blow-back is as important as understanding the current situation on the ground. While the undertaking may be somewhat speculative, we must attempt to provide some insight on the potential threats.

First, there is some concern that a military attack against Syria may spur retaliatory actions by Iran and Hezbollah against the United States, U.S. embassies, or U.S. interests abroad. Second, there is concern that Syria or its allies may engage in retaliatory attacks against U.S. allies in the region, including Israel, Turkey, and Jordan. Because about 15 to 25 percent of the opposition forces are associated with an affiliate of al-Qaeda, there is some concern that a strike that weakens Assad may ultimately benefit al-Qaeda. Each of these scenarios is possible, but none is self-executing or immediate.

At this point, we know that the most likely effect on homeland security is the action that has already occurred. Mr. Chairman, the risk of cyber attacks may be heightened in the wake of U.S. military action in Syria. It has been widely reported that the Syria Electronic Army, a hacking group loyal to the Assad regime, has launched cyber attacks that have disrupted the website of U.S. media and internet companies. In a few cases, those attacks completely disabled major media enterprises, including *The New York Times.* We have been told that this group does not have the capac-

ity to launch attacks capable of disrupting critical infrastructure, but we all know capacity can change.

So, Mr. Chairman, as we consider action in Syria, I think this Congress should consider the action necessary to protect our citizens from the most likely near-term repercussion of military intervention in Syria, a massive cyber attack. This committee has made several attempts to safeguard the cyber environment, yet our efforts have been rejected by my colleagues on the other side of the aisle.

Mr. Chairman, I urge you to once again attempt to move your leadership to assure that a meaningful cybersecurity bill can come to the House floor in the face of the risk of retaliation from the SEA. We must resolve our known cybersecurity vulnerabilities.

Again, thank you for holding this hearing, and I yield back.

[The statement of Mr. Thompson follows:]

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER BENNIE G. THOMPSON

SEPTEMBER 10, 2013

I agreed not to object to the Chairman's motion to seek unanimous consent to convene this hearing without the required 7-day notice. I agreed to this unusual request because of the subject matter of this hearing and the need for this panel to fulfill its unique jurisdictional mission in assuring that the American people know about the potential homeland security implications of United States military intervention in Syria.

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The United States has provided approximately $1 billion in humanitarian assistance. Also, in the last 3 years, Israel has used missiles to attack the Assad regime on three separate occasions; the Syrian government has used chemical weapons in small-scale attacks on several occasions; Iran and Hezbollah have lent their support to the Assad regime and the opposition forces have grown to include al-Qaeda affiliates or associates. Long-standing religious and regional divisions fuel this complicated conflict.

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As these facts demonstrate, the situation in Syria is tragic. Mr. Chairman, there is no doubt that this House will have a robust debate about whether the United States should pursue military action in Syria.

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Chairman MCCAUL. Let me thank the Ranking Member for as usual your cooperative manner and bipartisan spirit in waiving the rule so we can have this hearing here today. I can't tell you how much I appreciate that.

Second, it is very timely that you bring up the cyber issue. I, too, agree that the longer we fail to act the more danger we put this Nation in jeopardy of. We do have a draft cyber bill that, as I mentioned earlier, I am presenting to you, and our intention is to file and introduce this bill this week. So we thank you again.

Other Members are reminded that opening statements may be submitted for the record.

We are pleased to be joined by four distinguished witnesses to discuss this important topic today. One, a colleague, a friend of mine, served in the House for many years, the Honorable Chris Shays. Mr. Shays represented the southwest region of Connecticut from 1987 to 2009 in the United States Congress. He is now a distinguished fellow in public service at the University of New Haven.

A moderate Republican, who is socially progressive and fiscally conservative, Shays has a strong record of reaching across the aisle to solve our Nation's problems. Shays co-chaired the Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, a bipartisan commission charged with evaluating and improving America's wartime contracting. He chaired the Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security and Emerging Threats and International Relations, playing a major role in reforms that followed September 11.

At the forefront of the fight against terrorism before it was popular, Shays was instrumental in creating the Department of Homeland Security. He was the first Member of Congress to travel to Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein, returning numerous times to help secure better protective body armor and bomb-resistant vehicles for our troops.

Often traveling outside the umbrella of the military, he worked closely with the Iraqi people and NGOs, such as Save the Children and Mercy Corps. Following each trip, Shays outlined a series of observations and recommendations for then-President Bush, Defense Secretaries Rumsfeld and Gates, and others in the administration.

Our next witness is General Robert Scales. He is one of America's best-known and most-respected authorities on land warfare. He is currently president of Colgen, Incorporated, a consulting firm specializing in issues related to land power, war gaming, and strategic leadership. Prior to joining the private sector, Dr. Scales served over 30 years in the Army, retiring as a major general. General Scales served in command and staff positions in the United

States, Germany, and Korea and ended his military career as commandant of the United States Army War College.

Thanks for being here.

Next is Mr. Thomas Joscelyn, senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. Mr. Joscelyn is a terrorism analyst and writer living in New York. Most of his research and writing has focused on how al-Qaeda and its affiliates operate around the world. He is a regular contributor to the Weekly, Daily and Worldwide Standard and their on-line publications. He is also a senior editor of the *Long War Journal.* His work has been published by *National Review* on-line, the *New York Post*, and a variety of other publications.

Finally, we have Dr. Steven Biddle, a professor of political science and international affairs at the George Washington University. His work has been published in *Foreign Affairs,* the *Journal of Politics, The New York Times,* and the *Washington Post.* Professor Biddle has served on the Defense Policy Board and holds an appointment as adjunct senior fellow for defense policy at the Council on Foreign Relations.

The witnesses' full written statements will appear in the record.

The Chairman now recognizes Congressman Chris Shays for an opening statement.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE CHRISTOPHER SHAYS, FORMER REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you, Chairman McCaul and Ranking Member Thompson and all the other distinguished Members of this important committee. I see some familiar faces and new faces, and it is really an honor to be in your presence.

The Cold War is over, and the world is a more dangerous place. There is no place more dangerous than the Middle East. Yet, in spite of this, we have had no meaningful National conversation to help us understand this part of the world and its impact on us here at home, so it can't be surprising as a Nation that we are now uncertain and divided by about what to do in Syria.

When I took a delegation of Congressmen to the Middle East shortly after we invaded Iraq in 2003, we ended our trip meeting with the relatively new Syrian president. At our meeting, President Assad asked us, what are you hoping to achieve in Iraq, and why do you think what you are doing will give you the results you want?

Ironically, we could ask these same questions about our present focus on his country. What are we hoping to achieve in Syria, and why do we think doing what we are planning on doing will give us the results we want?

When it comes to foreign policy in the Middle East in particular, it appears we live in a strategy-free world. You are being asked to allow the President of the United States to use force, a tactic, when we have no clear sense what the strategy and mission is behind the tactic.

The Syrian Government crossed a red line in the use of chemical weapons for which the world community needs to respond, not just the United States. The debate centers on whether or not to support

the President's request to use force to punish the Assad government and provide a disincentive to other countries to use chemical weapons. We are also being told the President and the United States will lose face if we fail to take decisive military action.

The conclusion by the President and his administration and leaders on both sides of the aisle that the United States needs to take decisive military action with or without support from other countries would be a serious mistake with long-term consequences.

What should be our primary concern, that chemical weapons were used by the Syrian Army, or that Syria has chemical weapons that could fall into the hands of radical elements sympathetic to al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations? A military strike will do nothing to address that issue and would exacerbate it by accelerating the transfer of chemical weapons to people who would do us harm. The overriding question must be, who has control of these chemical weapons and how do we make sure that they do not fall into the hands of radical terrorist organizations that could and would do harm to the United States and other countries?

Rather than focusing on destroying elements of the Syrian government forces and choosing sides in a truly brutal civil war, our focus should be on how do we get these chemical weapons out of Syria and into the hands of the United States and/or Russia that have the capability to neutralize these weapons and, frankly, have successfully cooperated with each other to do that very thing over the last 2 decades?

I traveled with Senators Nunn, Lugar, Bob Graham, Domenici, Mikulski, and Bingham, Representative Spratt and our present Deputy Secretary of Defense, Ash Carter, throughout vast parts of Russia in May 2002 and saw first-hand this impressive cooperation. The Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program has reduced the threat of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons because the United States and Russia recognized the need to do this and did it.

We need to engage the world community, particularly Russia, to persuade Assad to give up his chemical weapons with the same motivation inspired by Nunn and Lugar and the same laser intensity of our 41st President, President George H.W. Bush, when he assembled the coalition to confront Saddam Hussein after Saddam's occupation of Kuwait.

I believe President Obama can rise to the occasion, seize this opportunity, avoid the use of military force and help restore our Nation's leadership.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Shays follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER SHAYS

SEPTEMBER 10, 2013

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Rather than focus on destroying elements of the Syrian government forces, and choosing sides in a truly brutal civil war, our focus should be on how do we get these chemical weapons out of Syria, and into the hands of the United States and/or Russia that have the capability to neutralize these weapons, and have successfully cooperated with each other to do that very thing over nearly 2 decades.

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I believe President Obama can rise to the occasion, seize this opportunity, avoid the use of military force, and help restore our Nation's leadership.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you, Chris Shays.

Next the Chairman recognizes General Scales.

STATEMENT OF MAJOR GENERAL ROBERT H. SCALES, JR. (RET. U.S. ARMY), FORMER COMMANDANT OF THE U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE

General SCALES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to address you on the subject of the crisis in Syria.

An American missile strike against Syria might well affect American security. We have seen in the past that half-measures, ineffective strikes, and shots across the bow against diabolical enemies have often resulted in tragic counter-strikes against American interests at home and abroad. President Reagan ordered an air strike against Libya in 1986. In time, Qaddafi retaliated with terrorist bombings that killed hundreds of Americans aboard Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. President Clinton ordered retaliation

strikes against terrorists who bombed American embassies in Africa. The terrorists, unaffected by these missile strikes, were emboldened to attack the USS Cole in 2000 and, sadly, later, the World Trade Center in 2001.

A missile strike that does not result in regime change in Syria or defeat the Syrian Army can only have a similar impact. Failure to defeat Assad will embolden the Syrians to retaliate against our homeland as well as Americans abroad. In fact, Assad has already telegraphed his intentions to retaliate, possibly with chemical weapons.

While a revenge strike against Syria might endanger the homeland, such an action will have virtually no impact on the Syrian regime or the course of this bloody sectarian war. Assad will likely survive. He and his murderous regime will only continue to butcher his people.

The proposed firepower strike violates every principle of war, to include surprise, mass, and a clearly-defined and obtainable strategic objective. As the Nation takes a knee, the Syrian Army will continue to hide, dispersion, camouflage, and secret his strategic systems among the population. What might have degraded Assad's force 2 weeks ago will certainly not have the intended effects as we delay and continue to telegraph our military intent.

Sadly, the principal motive for risking Americans lives in Syria is our "responsibility to protect" all of the world's innocents. This is not about threats to American security. In fact, members of this administration take great pride in the fact that their motives are driven by guilt over slaughters in Rwanda, the Sudan, and Kosovo, and not by any systemic threat to our own country. Are we really willing as a Nation to put the lives of our soldiers at risk to serve a purpose unrelated to our vital National interests?

This administration states that a strike is necessary to maintain American credibility in the face of threats from enemies, such as Iran. Killing more Syrians won't deter Iranian resolve to confront us. The Iranians have already gotten the message and have internalized our amateur approach and lack of resolve.

In the past, we have used a firepower-only strategy against the Serbs and the Libyans. But Syria is not Libya or Serbia. Perhaps we have become too used to fighting third-rate armies. As the Israelis learned in 1973, these guys are tough and mean-spirited killers with nothing to lose.

It is important to remind ourselves that strikes against Syria will involve the Nation in a sectarian civil war. Such conflicts are by their very nature the most intractable, ruthless, long-lasting, and bloody of any form of warfare. If the past is prologue, third-party involvement in civil wars never ends well for any of the participants.

These strikes can only end badly for our country. We have no legitimate strategic end-state in mind. A strike delivered for the purpose of sending a message will only inflame a region that does not think well of American motives after 10 years of war in the Middle East. Other nations might wish us well in this endeavor, but none, other than France, thinks well enough of our strategy to risk the lives of their soldiers.

We may wish to end this with a shot across the bow, but history shows time and again that war is the most unpredictable of all human endeavors. Once the dogs of war are unleashed, even for the most noble of motives, the consequences can only be unpredictable and likely to end tragically for this Nation.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of General Scales follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROBERT H. SCALES, JR.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address you on the subject "Crisis in Syria: Implications for Homeland Security."

An American missile strike against Syria might well adversely affect American security. We have seen in the past that half-measures, ineffective strikes, and "shots across the bow" against diabolical enemies have often resulted in tragic counter-strikes against Americans' interests at home and abroad. President Reagan ordered an air strike against Libya in 1986. In time the Libyans retaliated with a terrorist bombing that killed hundreds of Americans aboard Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. President Clinton ordered retaliation strikes against terrorists who bombed American embassies in Africa. The terrorists, unaffected by these missile strikes, were emboldened by attack the USS Cole in 2000 and later the World Trade Center in 2001 that killed thousands of innocent Americans.

A missile strike that does not result in regime change in Syria or the defeat of the Syrian Army can only have a similar impact. Failure to defeat Assad might well embolden the Syrians to retaliate against our homeland as well as Americans abroad. In fact Assad has already telegraphed his intention to retaliate, possibly with chemical weapons. There is an old military adage that certainly conveys in these circumstances: "If you want to kill the snake cut off the head not the tail." Limited strikes over a limited time against limited strategic objectives in Syria will only cut the tail and embolden the snake to strike back.

While a revenge strike against Syria might endanger the homeland such an action will have virtually no impact on the Syrian regime or the course of this bloody sectarian civil war. Assad will likely survive. He and his murderous regime will only continue to butcher his people. The proposed firepower strike violates every principle of war to include surprise, mass, and a clearly-defined and obtainable strategic objective. As the Nation "takes a knee" the Syrian Army will continue to hide, disperse, camouflage, and secret his strategic systems among the population. What might have degraded Assad's forces 2 weeks ago will certainly not have the intended effects as we delay and continue to telegraph our military intent.

Sadly the principal motive for risking American lives in Syria is our "responsibility to protect" the world's innocents. This is not about threats to American security. In fact members of this administration take pride in the fact that their motives are driven by guilt over slaughters in Rwanda, The Sudan, and Kosovo and not by any systemic threat to our own country. Are we really willing as a Nation to put the lives of our soldiers at risk to serve a purpose unrelated to our vital National interests? The American people have answered this question. The polls indicate that the American people do not believe that the risks are worth the rewards.

We should not put American lives at risk to make up for a slip of the tongue about red lines. This is an act of war done purely for retribution and to restore the reputation of a President. This administration states that such a strike is necessary to maintain American credibility in the face of threats from enemies such as Iran. Killing more Syrians won't deter Iranian resolve to confront us. The Iranians have already gotten the message and have internalized our amateur approach and lack of resolve. But by no means should such esoteric excuses for war such as "credibility" or the restoration of National honor ever be a justification for committing an act of war against a country that has never threated us in the least.

In the past we have used a firepower-only strategy against the Serbs and Libyans. But Syria is not Libya or Serbia. Perhaps we have become too used to fighting third-rate armies. As the Israelis learned in 1973 these guys are tough and mean-spirited killers with nothing to lose. It's important to remind ourselves that strikes against Syrian will involve the Nation in a sectarian civil war. Such conflicts are by their nature the most intractable, ruthless, long-lasting, and bloody of any form of warfare. If the past is prologue, third-party involvement in civil wars never ends well for any of the participants.

As in the past we will fire our missiles and likely kill innocent Syrians for no justifiable strategic purpose. We know how this war will begin but no one in the administration can postulate how it will end.

For a great power often an effective strategy is to maintain the potential for war rather than going to war. Our most respected Soldier-President, Dwight Eisenhower, possessed the gravitas and courage to say no to war 8 times during his presidency. He ended the Korean War and refused to aid the French in Indochina; he said no to his former war-time friends when they demanded American participation in the capture of the Suez Canal. And he resisted liberal democrats who wanted to aid the newly-formed nation of South Vietnam. We all know how that ended after his successor ignored Eisenhower's advice. My generation got to go to war.

Perhaps after more than half a century we might take a page from the Eisenhower era and accept the premise that saying no is the best of a very bad set of strategic alternatives.

These strikes can only end badly for our country. We have no legitimate strategic end-state in mind. A strike delivered for the purpose of "sending a message" will only inflame a region that does not think well of American motives after 10 years of war in the Middle East. Other nations might wish us well in this endeavor but none other than France thinks well enough of our strategy to risk the lives of their soldiers. We may wish to end this with a shot across the bow. But history shows time and again that war is the most unpredictable of all human endeavors. Once the dogs of war are unleashed, even for the most noble of motives, the consequences can only be unpredictable and likely end tragically for the Nation.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you, General Scales.

The Chairman now recognizes Mr. Joscelyn for an opening statement.

STATEMENT OF THOMAS JOSCELYN, SENIOR FELLOW, FOUNDATION FOR THE DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACIES

Mr. JOSCELYN. Chairman McCaul and Ranking Member Thompson and other Members of the committee, thank you for having me here today.

I come at this with a little bit of a different perspective. I help run a website called the *Long War Journal,* where we track the Syrian war on a daily basis amongst other conflict theaters. My testimony is going to be primarily about what al-Qaeda and extremist allies are doing in Syria right now, based on everything we can see in terms of the evidence, from videos to statements, to tracking the bad guys, and then sort of connect that to possible threats against us here in the homeland, to try and think about what this committee is really interested in, in addressing sort of emerging threats to the homeland and sort of being out in front of them, and I am going to try to do that very quickly in my statement.

We were tracking the Syrian war right from the get-go, the rebellion, and we were disturbed in late 2011 and early 2012 when Jabhat al-Nusra announced its presence on the battlefield. It was clear to us then that it was al-Qaeda, that it was an al-Qaeda affiliate, and all the evidence that has emerged since then makes it crystal clear that Jabhatans actually answer to al-Qaeda senior leadership in Pakistan. So it is al-Qaeda. It is not just an al-Qaeda-linked group, it is not just an al-Qaeda sympathetic group. There is a wealth of evidence that this is in fact al-Qaeda.

They are not the only al-Qaeda group inside Syria. There are actually two al-Qaeda affiliates that fight in Syria today. What they have done is they have basically joined forces with a number of extremist groups, who are not al-Qaeda but are sympathetic in one way or another to their ideology or their goals. So some of the larg-

est fighting coalitions inside Syria right now, including the Syrian Islamic Front, parts of the Syrian Islamic Liberation Front, actually fight on a day-to-day basis with al-Qaeda's affiliates in Syria. This acts as a force multiplier for al-Qaeda's army basically inside Syria.

Taking a step back for a second, what I want you to keep in mind is that al-Qaeda's goals inside Syria are not just about defeating Assad or attacking Assad's regime. In Syria, as in elsewhere, they want power for themselves. They are trying to build their own mini-state on Syrian territory, actually across the border even into Iraq. So much of what they are doing in northern Syria right now along with their extremist allies is they are basically consolidating power. They are actually setting up schools, setting up instructional facilities. They are indoctrinating their ideologies as much as they can basically within the Syrian population.

Now, many Syrians are not actually friendly to al-Qaeda's ideology. However, what we have seen time and again with al-Qaeda is they are actually getting more and more clever in basically finding ways to build popular support. They are in very much a malice sort-of grow-an-insurgency mode inside Syria and elsewhere where they are trying to build up their popular support among the local people. So much of their efforts in northern Syria are devoted to that.

But they are not confined to northern Syria. They actually fight throughout the rest of the country. We tracked the fighting in Latakia in the beginning of August, which is an Assad family stronghold. They were leading the charge with other brigades behind them. The same could be said through the rest of the country.

What does this all mean really for possible threats to the U.S. homeland? Well, in addition to getting new talent on the battlefield in Syria, they are bringing in Western recruits, they are bringing in recruits throughout Northern Africa and the Middle East—these are all people who could potentially be re-purposed for attacks, either in their home countries or in the West or against us. In addition to that new talent they are bringing in, they have also had some old talent come back to the battlefield. These are guys that have been freed by the Assad regime in the wake of the rebellion. At least according to credible reports, according to the *Wall Street Journal* and others, a guy named, just as one example, a guy known as Abu Asab al Suri has been freed by the Assad regime. Well, this is one of al-Qaeda's top strategic thinkers. He is a guy who actually laid the groundwork for how al-Qaeda should plot against the West, actually planning attacks on a smaller scale throughout the West. According to the press reporting I have seen, he is actually free. There are other guys like that who have rejoined the fight in Syria and are involved with al-Qaeda's efforts there.

The bottom line, from our perspective, is that while most of al-Qaeda's assets will be devoted to the fight inside Syria, over and over again we have seen this trend where a small part of their assets are always basically allocated to targeting the West. There is a good reason to believe that they will do the same if they are able to secure and maintain safe havens in Syria in the future.

In particular, I want to point you to two troubling reports that I think this committee should look into further. One was on May 30 out of the Turkish press that said that an al-Qaeda in Iraq cell of about 12 members was busted and they had a small amount of sarin nerve gas themselves in their possession. The following day, on June 1, the Iraqi government said that they busted a cell of five al-Qaeda members who were actually planning to use sarin nerve gas in Iraq, in Europe, and even in North America. That is what the Iraqi government claimed.

Now, I don't know the full details of those investigations or how they panned out, but those are the type of things that I would keep my eye on, because the battle in Iraq and Syria is joined together. They are always going to basically keep building up their forces to wage their insurgency, and they are going to devote some amount of that, some amount of their resources to coming after us.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Joscelyn follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THOMAS JOSCELYN

SEPTEMBER 10, 2013

Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, and Members of the committee, thank you for inviting me here today to discuss the potential threats to the United States emanating out of Syria. Obviously, the situation inside Syria is grim, with a despicable tyrant on one side and a rebellion compromised by al-Qaeda and like-minded extremists on the other. In between these two poles are the people who originally rose up against tyranny in search of a better life. As we've seen time and again in this long war, Muslims embroiled in violence in faraway lands are often the first line of defense against an ideology and an organization that pose a direct threat to the West. There are many Syrian families who deserve the free world's support today, beyond the prospect of limited air strikes.

We should have no illusions about the nature of the Syrian war. What we are witnessing right now is a conflict that will have ramifications for our security in the West. The fighting in Syria and the terrorist campaign in Iraq are deeply linked, feeding off of one another in a way that increases the violence in both countries and potentially throughout the region. American interests outside of Syria have already been threatened by the war. We saw this late last year when al-Qaeda repurposed a cell of Jordanian citizens who had fought in Syria for an attack inside their home country. They reportedly had the U.S. Embassy in their crosshairs and were planning a complex assault that involved other targets as well.

In my testimony today, I focus on the threat posed by al-Qaeda and allied groups inside Syria, recognizing that al-Qaeda did not start the Syrian rebellion. Moreover, there are many groups fighting on the side of the rebellion, making any clear-eyed analysis difficult. However, we can distill a number of observations.

Al-Qaeda and its extremist allies have grown much stronger since late 2011.—Al-Qaeda does not control the entire rebellion, which is made up of a complex set of actors and alliances. However, al-Qaeda and its allies dominate a large portion of northern Syria and play a key role in the fighting throughout the rest of the country. These same al-Qaeda-affiliated forces have fought alongside Free Syrian Army brigades. There is no clear geographic dividing line between the most extreme fighters and other rebels. For example, al-Qaeda's affiliates played a key role in the fighting in Latakia, an Assad stronghold on the coast, in early August. And within the past week we saw al-Qaeda-affiliated fighters lead an attack in Malula, a Christian village not far from Damascus. These are just two examples chosen from many.

Al-Qaeda has made the fight for Syria a strategic priority.—Ayman al Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's emir, has repeatedly called on jihadists to concentrate their efforts on the fight against the Assad regime. But al-Qaeda desires much more than Assad's defeat. Al-Qaeda wants to control territory and rule over others. This is consistent with al-Qaeda's desire to establish an Islamic Emirate in the heart of the Levant. In his book, *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner,* Zawahiri discussed at length the importance of creating such a state. Al-Qaeda and associated groups have consistently pursued this goal in jihadist hotspots around the globe and this is especially true in Syria today.

Two known al-Qaeda affiliates operate inside Syria: Jabhat al Nusra and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham (or Levant).—The leaders of both groups have sworn an oath of loyalty (bayat) to Ayman al Zawahiri and al-Qaeda's senior leadership. The heads of these two affiliates openly bickered over the chain of command in early April 2013. This forced Zawahiri to intervene, but the head of the ISIS initially rejected Zawahiri's decision to have the two remain independently-operated franchises. It appears that some sort of compromise has been brokered, however, as the two al-Qaeda affiliates fight alongside one another against their common enemies, including Kurdish forces in the north.

Al-Qaeda is not just a terrorist organization.—Al-Qaeda's leaders are political revolutionaries seeking to acquire power for themselves and their ideology in several countries. They have a plan for Syria. Al-Qaeda's affiliates inside Syria are not just fighting Assad's forces, or committing various other acts of terror. They are seeking to inculcate their ideology within the Syrian population. Many Syrians have no love for al-Qaeda's ideology, or its harsh brand of sharia law. But al-Qaeda knows this and has adjusted its tactics accordingly. Jabhat al Nusra and the ISIS are providing local governance in the areas they control, and are seeking to win hearts and minds by making various social services available to the population. This is a continuation of a trend that we've seen elsewhere, beginning in Yemen, where al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula launched Ansar al Sharia as its political face. Ansar al Sharia does more than fight al-Qaeda's enemies. It has provided food, electricity, medical care, and various other necessities to Yemenis. Al-Qaeda's affiliates in Syria have copied this strategy in Syria, and are increasing their popular support in some areas (especially in the north and east) in this manner. This model is being implemented in Raqqah, Aleppo, Deir al Zor.

Syria has become the central front in the global jihad.—Other al Qaeda-linked groups have joined the fight in Syria, thereby strengthening al-Qaeda's hand. Groups including the Pakistani Taliban (Tekrik-e Taliban) and the Muhajireen (Migrants) Brigade are fighting in Syria. The first group sent fighters and trainers from South Asia to Syria, while the second is comprised of Chechens and other foreign fighters. Indeed, several thousand foreign fighters from around the globe have joined the fight. Countries throughout North Africa and the Middle East have supplied a large number of jihadist recruits. In addition, a significant number of Europeans have traveled to Syria for jihad.

Some of the more powerful Syrian rebel groups are closely allied with al-Qaeda's affiliates.—Ahrar al Sham and its coalition of like-minded groups, the Syrian Islamic Front (SIF), fight alongside al-Qaeda's fighters regularly. Brigades belonging to another Islamist coalition, the Syrian Islamic Liberation Front (SILF), have coordinated their operations with al-Qaeda's affiliates and Ahrar al Sham in key battles as well. For example, fighters from Nusra, the SIF, and the SILF overran the Taftanaz Airbase in January. The collective strength of these groups is easily in the tens of thousands of fighters Nation-wide.

As the 9/11 Commission recognized, there is a direct connection between terrorism "over there" and the terrorist threat to Americans "over here."—Most of al-Qaeda's assets are devoted to acquiring power in North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. However, some portion of their assets is always devoted to terrorist plots against the West. Before the 9/11 attacks, most al-Qaeda recruits were trained to fight alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan or as part of insurgencies elsewhere. Only a small number of al-Qaeda members were selected to take part in international operations. Since 9/11, al-Qaeda has greatly expanded its overall footprint by directing or supporting various insurgencies. This increases al-Qaeda's potential recruits, with a small percentage of them being repurposed for operations against the West. We have seen this in Yemen, for example, where al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula simultaneously increased its capacity to wage an insurgency against the government, while also increasing its ability to launch attacks on the U.S. homeland. Al-Qaeda's Iraqi affiliate, which spawned the Al Nusra Front, has dedicated a small part of its resources to attacking the West as well. The Department of Homeland Security announced in 2004 that al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) was ordered by Osama bin Laden to assemble a cell capable of attacking the United States. In 2007, failed attacks in London and Glasgow were tied back to AQI. It should be noted that during this same time-period AQI was mainly focused on winning territory, not attacking the West.

Al-Qaeda has talent inside Syria today, including top operatives who currently pose a threat to the West.—According to credible press reports, a top al-Qaeda terrorist named Mustafa Setmariam Nasar (a.k.a. Abu Musab al Suri) was freed from prison in the wake of the rebellion. Nasar has been tied to al-Qaeda's terrorist plotting inside Europe, including the networks that executed the 2004 Madrid train bombings and the 2005 attacks in London. Nasar played a prominent role in al-

Qaeda's operations prior to being detained in 2005 and transferred to Syrian custody. Nasar is a widely influential jihadist thinker and a key advocate of small-scale terrorist attacks inside the West. He was reportedly freed by the Assad regime in the wake of the current rebellion. One of Nasar's closest colleagues, known as Abu Khalid al Suri, was appointed by Zawahiri to a key position within the region. We should wonder what happened to Mohammed Zammar, an al-Qaeda recruiter who helped convince the 9/11 Hamburg cell to travel to Afghanistan for training. Zammar was once imprisoned by the Assad regime and may very well be free today. In addition to this "old school" talent, al-Qaeda has been recruiting Westerners who could be used in attacks against their home countries or elsewhere in the West. In recent months, European officials have openly worried about this possibility.

Al-Qaeda's affiliates are seeking possession of chemical and biological weapons in Syria.—On May 30, the Turkish press reported that an al Nusra Front cell had been arrested and was found to be in possession of about 2 kilos of sarin gas. The following day, June 1, Iraqi officials announced that they had broken up an al-Qaeda cell that was seeking to launch sarin nerve gas attacks in Iraq, Europe, and possibly North America. If the Iraqi government's claims are accurate, then we already have evidence that al-Qaeda's affiliates in Iraq and Syria intend to use chemical weapons in an attack the West. I encourage the Homeland Security Committee to investigate these claims and ascertain for itself the extent of al-Qaeda's efforts in this regard.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you, Mr. Joscelyn.

The Chairman now recognizes Dr. Biddle for an opening statement.

STATEMENT OF STEPHEN BIDDLE, ADJUNCT SENIOR FELLOW FOR DEFENSE POLICY, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. BIDDLE. I would like to thank the committee for the chance to talk to you today on this critical National question. Clearly, the situation in Syria is an outrage, and it is an affront to the conscience of the world, as the President than the Secretary of State have argued. Lots of people want to do something about it, and I can understand why.

The problem here is in figuring out what we can actually do that would actually secure our aims at tolerable cost without risking mission creep and a slide down a slippery slope into much larger commitments that would exceed our actual stakes in the conflict, and the difficulty in finding a military option that can actually do these things lies in an underlying ultimate asymmetry interests ourselves and Bashar al-Assad.

Whereas our stakes are limited, his are not. For Assad, this is literally a war of survival, both for himself and for his Alawite community as a whole. This is not a war of survival for us. This is going to make it very hard for us to impose our will on Assad at a price that we are willing to pay. Sooner or later, we are likely to face a choice between standing down with important aims unmet or escalating to levels of commitment that outstrip our real interests in the conflict.

Now, the details on how and why this would work out vary as a function of the aims, the nature, and the targets of a possible strike. My written testimony deals with these in some detail. For now, I will just touch briefly on one particular aspect of this, and that is the argument that we need to maintain our credibility following the President's commitment to escalate if the Syrians used chemical weapons and the argument that we can do this by a limited use of force that won't exceed the American people's tolerance for war-waging.

Certainly, the President did put U.S. credibility on the line, and if we don't act now, we will incur some cost to our reputation as a result. But it is not clear that this is a problem we can solve with limited air strikes that would almost certainly leave Assad in power. The problem here is that limited strikes send inherently ambiguous signals. Perhaps Iran or others would read a limited strike that does not topple Assad or end the fighting as a sign that we are resolute, because we acted at all, but they could just as easily read limited strikes as a sign that the United States is in fact feckless, war-weary, and irresolute for limiting ourselves to pinpricks when the declared U.S. ambition of removing Assad remains unmet.

Given the underlying asymmetry and interests between ourselves and Assad, limited strikes are unlikely to achieve major goals. If we insist on limiting ourselves with major goals unmet, that means that any signals we send will inherently be ambiguous and easy for others to read as the opposite of the message that we intend to send. The only way around this problem with high confidence is to over-invest, to commit more force than our stakes are worth to us, and to start down an escalatory slippery slope that could lead to far larger involvements than I suspect most Americans would support.

An initial use of force that is actually limited, discrete, and bounded thus doesn't resolve the credibility question. It just postpones it a bit into a subsequent debate in which we will already, if that happens, be militarily engaged and thus where the credibility costs to us of backing down then could arguably be even higher than if we take our lumps on credibility now instead.

As with most complicated issues, of course, there are important arguments on both sides of this and there aren't any cost-free or risk-free options on the table. Reasonable people as a result can disagree on the net merits of whether we should act or not in light of this, but on balance, for me I believe the costs and dangers of using force are greater than the costs and dangers, real as they are, of not using force, and on balance, therefore, I believe the case against using force is the stronger one here.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Biddle follows:]

STATEMENT OF STEPHEN BIDDLE

SEPTEMBER 10, 2013

The administration has requested a Congressional vote to authorize an American use of military force against the Syrian government in the aftermath of an apparent Syrian chemical weapon (CW) attack against mostly civilian targets in the Damascus suburbs on August 21. Should the Congress authorize such a strike, or oppose it?

The purpose of this testimony is to weigh the principal arguments for and against such an authorization.[1] As with most complex issues, there are important arguments on both sides of the question, and I seek to present them in a balanced way. Neither the case for nor the case against using force is without serious costs and risks—here is no option here that does not have important dangers. Reasonable people can disagree on the net merits given this.

Yet on balance the case against using force is stronger here. Syria poses a major asymmetry in stakes between ourselves and President Assad: We have interests in

[1] The author would like to thank Julia MacDonald of George Washington University and Kevin Grossinger of the Council on Foreign Relations for their assistance in preparing this testimony.

Syria, both humanitarian and realpolitik, but they are limited; for Assad this is a literally life-and-death struggle for his own survival and that of his Alawite community. This underlying difference in stakes will make it very difficult for us to impose our will on Assad at a price we should be willing to pay. Sooner or later we are thus likely to face a choice between standing down with important aims unmet or escalating to levels of commitment that outstrip our interests in the conflict. If so, it is better to stand down sooner, and more cheaply, rather than later, and more expensively. It would have been better if we had never begun this escalatory process by issuing "red line" threats that were not in our interest to enforce; nevertheless it is wiser to cut our losses while these losses are still relatively limited rather than doubling down and, in all likelihood, increasing the eventual price of failure. Although there are important costs in backing down, this is ultimately the least-bad course even so.

Nor is it clear that the United States can preserve its credibility with only limited airstrikes that leave Assad in power and the war unresolved. Preserving U.S. credibility is among the most commonly-cited arguments for using force. Yet a limited strike sends ambiguous signals whose ambiguity will be highlighted if the strikes fail to topple Assad or end the war: Perhaps America will look resolute for acting at all, but Iran or others could instead see us as feckless for limiting ourselves to pinpricks when the declared U.S. ambition of removing Assad remains unachieved. Given the asymmetry in stakes here, ambitious aims like toppling Assad are likely to require far more than limited airstrikes; limits we impose on ourselves are thus likely to leave unmet our stated ambition of removing Assad and this will inevitably allow others to read this self-limitation as a lack of resolve to finish the job. Limited strikes now thus do not settle the credibility question: We will always be sending the Iranians ambiguous signals unless we commit more force that the stakes here are worth to us.

Below I assess these arguments in terms of the various aims some have cited as grounds for using force. Assessing these arguments is complicated by the still-undefined nature of the proposed attack, its targets, and its objectives, and the plasticity of the proposed authorizing resolution, whose exact wording is still under negotiation. To evaluate the issue properly it is thus necessary to consider a range of possible objectives, their importance, and the prospects of achieving them with attacks of different kinds. I therefore treat in sequence each of the five main goals an attack might be designed to achieve: Deterring further CW use and upholding norms against the employment of such weapons; preserving U.S. credibility; enabling a negotiated settlement to the war; toppling Assad and his government; and ending the humanitarian crisis by saving civilian lives. I conclude with summary observations and recommendations.[2]

DETERRING SYRIAN CW USE AND ENFORCING INTERNATIONAL NORMS

Among the most salient purposes now cited by strike supporters is to deter further CW use by Syria and to enforce an international norm against the use of such weapons. A relatively limited U.S. attack, it is often argued, might be enough to tip the balance of Syrian government cost and benefit against the use of CW, which would have a number of advantages if so.

Many believe, for example, that chemical weapons are uniquely abhorrent and should be prohibited on humanitarian grounds regardless of the actual scale of killing they produce. There has been a long-standing (if imperfectly observed) norm against chemical warfare; many who would like international politics in general to be more rule-bound and less anarchic thus favor upholding this norm as a way of promoting norm compliance more broadly.

There are also realpolitik reasons to limit CW use. In particular, chemical weapons are often seen as a means for weaker powers to end-run American advantages in conventional warfare, hence the United States has a military incentive to discourage their use in order to reinforce U.S. conventional superiority. Some worry that chemical weapons could be obtained or synthesized by terrorists and used against

[2] I assume below that Syrian government forces did indeed use chemical weapons on August 21, and before then on a more limited scale. There has been debate over the adequacy of the administration's evidence on this point, but it is not my purpose to adjudicate this debate or weigh the technical details pro or con, especially in an unclassified analysis. Suffice to say that the administration had given few indications before August 21 that they were spoiling for a chance to attack Syria in a way that would give them a motive to manufacture evidence of Syrian CW use—on the contrary, their preference seemed clearly to avoid military action, and their perceived self-interest presumably lay in holding any adduced evidence to a very high standard of proof. I can only assume, therefore, that they are convinced, and I will proceed on the assumption that they are right.

American or allied civilians. And CW poses environmental hazards that vary with the prevailing winds and the scale of release, and could in principle threaten Syria's neighbors, including Israel. Other things being equal, it would clearly be in America's interest to see an end to the use of chemical weapons, whether in Syria or elsewhere.

Other things are not equal, however. In particular, limited strikes could well fail to deter Assad. The stakes for Assad in Syria's civil war are literally existential. Not only could he and his family be killed or imprisoned if his government falls, but the war now involves a powerful strand of identity conflict pitting Assad's Alawite minority sect, which has governed Syria for generations, against the majority Sunnis, who dominate the rebel movement. In an identity war of this kind, the entire losing community risks oppression at best and genocide at worst at the hands of the victorious group. Assad probably views the conflict as a struggle for the survival of his entire sectarian community. Successful deterrence requires a credible threat to impose pain that exceeds the recipient's stake in the conflict. This will be very difficult to do with Assad.

Of course, the issue here is not necessarily victory or defeat in the war as a whole, but merely Syrian use of one weapon type—CW—in the conduct of that war. Can the United States credibly threaten to impose enough pain on Assad to persuade him to withhold this one weapon while continuing the war with conventional means alone?

Perhaps. After all, withholding CW use is not tantamount to suicide or surrender for Assad. He has a large, well-equipped conventional military that might well succeed even without CW. Assuming that Syrian CW use was deliberate (and not accidental or unauthorized), Assad has apparently concluded that it helps him militarily, but CW probably isn't decisive for the outcome of the war and perhaps Assad will conclude that he's better off without it and without the danger of American airstrikes that further CW use could bring.

But we cannot know for sure. And there are many good reasons to be cautious about our ability to predict Assad's reaction to American threats or small-scale American airstrikes.

Our ability to understand Assad's decision calculus is very limited. This is a man from a very different cultural background and upbringing than ours, in the midst of a desperate war for survival, whose knowledge of the United States and our likely future actions is limited and subject to a wide array of cognitive biases and organizational pathologies. Many authoritarian governments find accurate reporting of unwelcome news very difficult: Bearers of bad tidings can pay with their lives or their freedom for speaking truth to power in dictatorships. Such governments may thus tend to discount threats from outside powers designed to dissuade them from their preferred policies—who will insist on telling Assad that he must bow to American pressure when the price of bearing such bad news could be the firing squad?[3] Psychologists tell us that leaders' prior preferences and expectations strongly influence their perception of new information: A dictator who has committed himself to a war of survival using any means necessary, who desperately wants to believe that his strategy can work, and who may have calculated that the outside world would stand aside, may well tend to discount American threats as bluffs because he so badly wants them to be and because human cognition encourages all people to try and fit new information into preexisting expectations. It can be difficult for threats to overcome motivated cognitive biases that encourage people to believe that their preferred strategies will work.[4] Deterrence turns on the specific decision calculus of the opponent—it is the enemy's perceptions, not ours, that determines whether they desist under threat or not. To be confident that a deterrent threat will succeed we must be confident that the enemy will read the threat as we wish it to be read, and will evaluate it the way we hope it will be evaluated. Given all the perceptual filters

[3] On intelligence assessment and reporting in autocracies, see, e.g., Kenneth Pollack, *The influence of Arab culture on Arab military effectiveness* (PhD dissertation, MIT, 1996), ch. 3; Kevin Woods, James Lacey, and Williamson Murray, "Saddam's Delusions: The View from Inside," *Foreign Affairs,* May–June 2006; Barry Blechman and Tamara Coffman Wittes, "Defining Moment: the Threat and Use of Force in American Foreign Policy," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 114 (Spring 1999), pp. 1–30; cf. Dan Reiter and Allan Stam, "Democracy and Battlefield Effectiveness," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 42 (June 1998), pp. 259–277.

[4] See, e.g., Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), ch. 4. For an overview of the cognitive and other potential barriers to successful deterrence across cultural divides, see Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein, eds., *Psychology and Deterrence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985).

and sources of potential bias at work in our relationship with Bashar al-Assad, it is impossible to guarantee that our deterrent threat will succeed.[5]

The more limited the strike, moreover, the greater the odds that Assad discounts our threat and continues to use CW. One way to read a small U.S. use of force is that it signals American willingness to escalate if Assad defies us. But it could also be read just the opposite way: As a signal of U.S. unwillingness to strike massively (if we were really willing to use massive force, why haven't we?), and a sign that the United States is reluctant to commit. The very emphasis the administration now places on the limited nature of our prospective attack is a very plausible indication of Presidential ambivalence and unease with the use of force in Syria; Assad would not have to be crazy to read this as a sign that the United States lacks the will to intervene decisively. Limited attacks send ambiguous signals that can be read as commitment or reluctance; the more limited the attack, the more ambiguous the signal and the lower the odds that an audience subject to cognitive, cultural, and institutional blinders will read it the way we want them to.

Assad also needs to worry about others' perceptions of his resolve. To survive, he must convince his officers and his soldiers that he is resolute and capable of winning the war—if he looks weak or irresolute, lieutenants who fear getting stuck on the wrong side of a losing war might jump ship and defect or flee early while they still can. He might well regard a limited U.S. airstrike as a test of his own ability to project an image of toughness and commitment to his own officers and thus refuse to back down. He is also presumably wary of signaling weakness to the rebel alliance in a way that could embolden them or encourage them to hold out for maximalist ambitions of ousting or trying him. Just as we worry about the effects of backing down on perceptions of our toughness and credibility (see below), so Assad has the same worries or even more so—and this could lead him to defy our wishes and continue CW use simply to demonstrate his own toughness and resolve.

If our strike fails to deter Assad, and we detect further Syrian CW use, what then? Do we double-down and escalate to heavier attacks to prove that we meant it? If not, would this not be at least as damaging to our credibility and reputation for resolve than if we decline to attack in the first place? After all, the declared purpose of the attack would presumably have been to deter CW use—if the purpose has not been met, would standing down not send the message that anyone who simply rides out initial, limited U.S. airstrikes is off the hook, devaluing the currency of small-scale attacks and making it less likely than before that we can signal resolve through the limited use of force in some future crisis? If we are not actually willing to follow through and carry out the implicit threat of escalation inherent in a limited strike then the limited strike amounts to a bluff; if we are caught bluffing we reduce our ability to succeed without follow-on escalation the next time, even if the next time we really are willing to escalate.

How important, then, is it that we deter Syrian CW use, and how much force should we be willing to apply to this end? In fact the stakes here for the United States are real, but quite limited.

Yes, we do have realpolitik interests in deterring prospective enemies from CW use, but our forces are trained and equipped to operate in chemical environments, and it is unlikely that CW use alone could defeat the American military or even impose intolerable military costs or casualties. We should prefer that wars stay conventional, but we should not be willing to pay a heavy up-front price in Syria to ensure this. CW has proven to be a very difficult weapon for terrorists to use effectively; for CW to be as lethal as readily-available non-CW alternatives such as truck-borne fertilizer bombs would require access to sophisticated delivery means capable of disseminating CW agents efficiently over large areas. While it is not impossible for future terrorists to master this, they have not to date, and it is not clear that U.S. airstrikes against Syria would meaningfully affect the likelihood of this happening in the future. Syrian CW could in principle affect Israel or other neighbors, but CW releases as large and uncontrolled as this would also threaten Alawite civilians on a scale that is at least as likely to deter Assad as the threat of U.S. airstrikes.

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[5] One could also argue that this is not actually a case of deterrence but an instance of what Thomas Schelling calls compellence—deterrence uses threats to prevent enemy action, compellence uses threats to cause the enemy to act. Inasmuch as Assad is evidently already using CW (albeit on a still-limited scale), one could argue that U.S. demands amount to a compellent strategy to cause Assad to act by halting something he is already doing. This distinction matters in that compellence is often considered harder and less likely to succeed than deterrence. On the distinction and its implications, see Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008 ed. of 1966 orig.).

The normative stakes are similarly real, but limited. The United States does have an interest in discouraging the use of "taboo" weapons such as chemical, biological, or nuclear arms, and there is some reason to believe that norms help reduce the scale of their employment. Yet these norms have not prevented CW from being used when states felt they needed them most, and other weapon types subject to public opprobrium have similarly been used when states felt they had to: Unrestricted submarine warfare and bombing of civilian homes were both condemned before World Wars I and II, but were widely used when militaries felt they needed them to avoid defeat.[6] Norms can help reduce such use at the margin, and this is valuable, but it is not infinitely valuable and the scale of military action justified now to support the CW taboo is thus correspondingly limited.[7]

Nor is the issue of norm compliance as clear-cut as is sometimes suggested. In fact there are conflicting norms affected by any U.S. strike: an attack might uphold the norm of CW non-use, but it would surely undermine the norm against interstate uses of force without U.N. Security Council authorization except in cases of self-defense. Many, especially in the Arab world, would surely see any U.S. strike without UNSC approval as a self-interested exercise of power rather than a selfless enforcement of humanitarian norms.[8] It is not clear that a U.S. attack would on balance conduce to greater norm observance afterward rather than lesser.

None of this is to suggest that a deterrent strike cannot work, or that Assad is guaranteed to ignore our threats, or that an initial attack means we are doomed to escalate. But none of these perils can be ruled out. And the circumstances here—especially the pressure Assad is under to succeed and the barriers to our ability to project his response with confidence—make the dangers particularly acute. Reasonable people could argue that we are best served by rolling the dice and taking our chances with a limited strike for deterrent purposes, and maybe that will succeed if attempted. But it would be irresponsible policy making to strike on the assumption that it will work, and without a plan for what we will do in the event that a small-scale attack fails, because it may well. And the limited nature of our interests in deterring CW use means that it would not take much escalation beyond a limited initial strike for our efforts to exceed our stake.

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[6] On the role of norms in shaping international political behavior in general, and weapon use choices in particular, see Jeffrey Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); idem, "Which Norms Matter? Revisiting the 'Failure' of Internationalism," *International Organization*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (1997): 31–63; Richard Price, "Reversing the Gun Sights: Transnational Civil Society Targets Land Mines," *International Organization,* Vol. 52, No. 3 (1998): 613–644; Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); R. Charli Carpenter, "Vetting the Advocacy Agenda: Network Centrality and the Paradox of Weapons Norms," *International Organization*, Vol. 65, No. 1 (2011): 69–102. On chemical weapons specifically see Richard Price, *The Chemical Weapons Taboo* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007). On conditions under which norms during warfare break down, see Alexander Downes, *Targeting Civilians in War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008). Finally, for a recent discussion of the relative importance of military utility over normative concerns in U.S. public opinion see Daryl G. Press, Scott D. Sagan, Banjamin A. Valentino, "Atomic Aversion: Experimental Evidence on Taboos, Traditions, and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 107, No. 1 (2013): 188–206.

[7] Nor is there a strong logical basis for treating CW as uniquely abhorrent. Even in World War I, where CW was more widely used than ever since, the scale of suffering inflicted by gas weapons was vastly smaller than that caused by conventional weapons. In Syria today, the 1,429 civilian deaths attributed to CW in the August 21 attack is dwarfed by the perhaps 100,000 people killed to date by conventional munitions. It is obviously horrible to die from convulsions and asphyxiation after ingesting Sarin gas, but it is also obviously horrible to die from being disemboweled by conventional artillery or having ones' limbs blown off by conventional roadside bombs. The unique cultural history of chemical weapons and their similarity to insecticide inspires some to treat them as a thing apart from high explosives or other means of killing and wounding humans, but it is far from clear that any rigorous ethical argument would make a clear distinction.

[8] See, e.g., Shibley Telhami, "Questioning Credibility," *Foreign Policy*, September 6, 2013. On conflicting norms in Syria, see Clive Crook, "The Moral Case for a Syria Strike," *http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-09-04/the-moral-case-for-a-syria-strike.html.* It is also debatable how strong or how normatively compelling the anti-CW norm is. Jeffrey Legro, for example, has argued that norms on weapon non-use are most influential when the norm coincides with a military preference to avoid such weapons and an absence of perceived military need on the part of prospective users: Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire*. CW has often met these conditions in the past, but to the extent that Assad believes his regime is threatened by rebels without easy access to CW of their own, he may thus see a real military need to employ such weapons—as others have, too: Notably Saddam Hussein in the Iran-Iraq War: see Victor Utgoff, *The Challenge of Chemical Weapons* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1990), pp.69–87; Anthony Cordesman and Abraham Wagner, *The Lessons of Modern War, Volume II: The Iran-Iraq War* (Boulder: Westview, 1990).

PRESERVING U.S. CREDIBILITY

When the President announced last year that Syrian CW use would cross a "red line" in a way that would change his calculus, he was clearly threatening to escalate U.S. involvement if Assad used CW. Nations routinely rely on threats to deter rivals from aggressive action; for deterrence to succeed without war, such threats must be believed by their target audience. Much is thus at stake in the credibility of American threats. Among the areas where this matters most is the case of Iran: The President is hoping that a vague threat of military action will deter the Iranians from crossing the nuclear threshold. Many now argue that if the President issues a clear threat to Assad and then backs down when Assad calls his bluff, this will signal weakness and irresolution to Iran and encourage them to proceed with their nuclear program and ignore American threats to destroy it first. This problem is compounded by the administration's apparent foot-dragging on earlier evidence of smaller-scale Syrian CW use: For months, the administration responded to allies' claims of such use by delaying for further study, then finally authorizing only a minimal response by promising small arms and ammunition for the Syrian rebels and delaying delivery of even that.

The administration's understandable ambivalence over intervention in Syria might imply that the best course would have been to walk back the President's "red line" comment (which was apparently not included in his prepared remarks) in subsequent press guidance. Instead, the administration reiterated its commitment to the CW "red line," and in public comments by the Secretary of State and others after the August 21 attack it radically reinforced its commitment to punish Assad. Whatever the reputational costs of ignoring the "red line" before August 21, they are now much higher as a result of this very public recommitment.

Given this, wouldn't it undermine the credibility of all U.S. assurances—both promises to allies and threats to enemies—for the United States to now withhold the escalation it has so clearly threatened?

Yes, it will. It would have been better if the "red line" commitment had never been made, and if the President had not tied U.S. credibility to this threat. In doing so, he created a U.S. National security interest in preserving our credibility that did not exist before-hand, and to back down now, in the aftermath of this commitment, is to incur a cost in diminished credibility going forward. That will indeed reduce our deterrent leverage for hard cases like Iran, and our ability to reassure allies.

The question, however, is how much deterrent power we would lose by backing down here, how much cost and risk we would incur by acting, and just as important, how much improvement in deterrent credibility we would gain by limited actions commensurate with our limited stakes in Syria. In fact the reputational effect of backing down now is easy to exaggerate, the danger of further escalation if we act now is substantial, and the benefit of limited action without such escalation is itself limited.

Political scientists have studied reputation and credibility, and the results of a generation of scholarship suggest that statesmen often overestimate the degree to which reputation shapes others' behavior in future crises. This is partly due to cognitive bias: Prior beliefs shape perception of incoming information, and rivals who want to act aggressively without U.S. interference often harbor fond beliefs that the United States is a paper tiger who will stand aside rather than challenging them. This prior belief often leads them to discount evidence of U.S. resolve and fixate instead on instances where the United States backed down. Where the prior belief is strongly held it can be very difficult to overcome by piling up cases of resolve—even a small sample of irresolute behavior can overwhelm all this, and there has already been more than enough irresolution in U.S. behavior (over decades) to provide all the evidence needed for motivated bias to persuade rivals like Iran that the United States is irresolute.[9] But statesmen also exaggerate the importance of reputation relative to circumstances in shaping rivals' behavior. Most states pay less attention to others' history in other times and places than they do to others' real capabilities and apparent stakes in the immediate matter at hand. States may believe others are paper tigers, but if others' capabilities and interests in the current crisis make

[9] Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, ch. 4. The literature on learning in international relations similarly suggests that beliefs of third parties are unlikely to change because vicarious learning rarely occurs. See Jack Levy, "Learning and Foreign Policy: Sweeping a Conceptual Minefield," *International Organization* 48, no. 2 (1994): 279–312. Yuen Foong Khong, for example, finds that U.S. leaders paid little attention to the French experience from Vietnam despite the fact its potential to provide valuable information about the resources, tactics, and resolve of the North Vietnamese. See Yuen Khong Fong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

them a threat then statesmen usually pay attention and act accordingly.[10] Cognitive bias makes it hard for the United States to establish a reputation for toughness with enemies who believe we are irresolute; the importance of circumstances over reputation anyway makes it less valuable to act merely to build reputation—especially when acting now might weaken us militarily or reduce the force we can actually bring to bear on other crises later.

And if we do attack Syria now, the risk of escalation is serious. Limited U.S. airstrikes will almost certainly not end the war. They may or may not deter future Syrian CW use (see above), but they will surely not end the war, and probably won't change its trajectory much if our strikes are indeed limited. Some believe that we can mount a limited strike, declare the commitment embodied in the President's "red line" met, and halt with no further obligations. Perhaps. But if so this will occur in spite of clear failure to stop the violence, topple Assad, or prevent him from killing Syrian civilians with conventional weapons. A brutal war will continue, with further atrocities from conventional weapons if not CW, and with on-going calls from a harried rebel alliance and especially its moderate wing that we do something to help prevent their slaughter. It is obviously difficult to ignore such calls now, when the U.S. military has not been committed to the conflict. How much harder will it be once we have crossed the threshold and intervened ourselves? We would then face the additional charge that our unwillingness to escalate is allowing future rivals to believe that they can survive U.S. airstrikes, and that U.S. airpower's reputation for efficacy is at risk. Unless we act with enough violence to defeat Assad or otherwise end the war, there is no natural threshold beyond which we escape from the charge that our credibility is threatened by our failure to escalate. Unless we are prepared to do whatever it takes, we will thus eventually be forced to stand down with important aims unmet and risk allowing Iran or others to label us a paper tiger as a result. This will be just as true after an initial airstrike as it is now—striking now does not absolve us from the charge of irresolution and fecklessness, it just continues the debate into the next phase of the war after greater levels of prior commitment. And if it makes sense to ignore such charges then and limit our commitment to a single wave of limited airstrikes, why would it not make just as much sense to ignore such charges now and limit our commitment to arming and training the rebels without U.S. military action? If we care only about a legalistic satisfaction of the Presidential "red line" commitment without actually toppling Assad or ending the war, then why can't we satisfy this requirement with a truly minimum response and simply up the ante on aid to the rebels? In fact the more we invest and the more we commit the prestige and reputation of the U.S. military to the war, the greater the escalatory pressure we will face if that commitment is limited and falls short.

If we are not prepared to do whatever it takes, then we will thus ultimately suffer some degree of price to our reputation and credibility; this is not a cost that can be averted with a limited program of airstrikes unless Assad proves less resolute than his own stakes would imply. In fact the price may be lower now than if we climb higher on the escalatory ladder before we accept our limits and back down.

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[10] Daryl Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Aaron Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Great Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline 1895–1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). See also Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), which argues that reputations for resolve do not require repeated uses of force to sustain. For further studies that cast doubt on the claim that reputation matters see Paul K. Huth and Bruce R. Russett, "What Makes Deterrence Work? Cases From 1900 to 1980" *World Politics* Vol. 36, No. 4 (July 1984): 496–526; and Ted Hopf, *Peripheral Visions: Deterrence Theory and American Foreign Policy in the Third World, 1965–1990* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995). Where reputation is claimed to matter to foreign policy outcomes, the conditions under which it does so are restrictive and highly context dependent: see, e.g., John D. Orme, *Deterrence, Reputation and Cold-War Cycles* (London: MacMillan, 1992); Jonathan Shimshoni, *Israel and Conventional Deterrence: Border Warfare from 1953–1970* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); and Elli Lieberman, "What Makes Deterrence Work: Lessons from the Egyptian-Israeli Enduring Rivalry," *Security Studies*, Vol. 4 (1995): 833–92. Glenn Snyder, in *Deterrence and Defense: Toward a Theory of National Security* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), argues that reputations are only likely to form when the behavior of a defender runs counter to the expectations of the potential attacker. Finally, a recent study of reputation and military effectiveness tends to support the importance of capability and stakes in shaping third-party judgments about an opponents' war-fighting ability, but again these reputational effects are circumscribed to cases where the fighting environment is similar. See Kathryn Cochran, "Strong Horse or Paper Tiger? Assessing the Reputational Effects of War Fighting" Ph.D. Dissertation Duke University 2011.

ENABLING A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT TO THE WAR

The administration clearly hopes to resolve the conflict with a negotiated settlement in which the Assad regime and the rebels agree to lay down their arms in exchange for a power-sharing deal of some kind. The prospects for such a deal are currently remote, however. Neither side is willing to accept the compromises needed, and neither side trusts the other to comply with any such terms in the aftermath. Some argue that U.S. airstrikes could play a catalytic role in enabling such a deal by changing the regime's interest calculus: By tilting the playing field in favor of the rebels, they argue, such strikes could give the regime an incentive they now lack to make compromises and accept a negotiated peace. Some cite the 1995 Dayton Accords that ended the war in Bosnia, arguing that a program of NATO airstrikes brought the Serbs to the table and enabled settlement; if so, perhaps U.S. airstrikes in Syria could produce a comparable result in 2013.

There are many challenges here, however. The Dayton analogy, for example, is a weak one: The negotiations were conducted following not just a program of NATO airstrikes but a massive Croatian-Bosniak ground offensive in Operation Storm that had swept Serbian forces from the Krajina in a 4-day blitzkrieg and threatened the Serbs with military annihilation if they refused a deal.[11] No comparable rebel blitzkrieg is in store for Syria. Nor can we readily predict the effect of limited airstrikes on either the regime's or the rebels' willingness to parley: The same opacity that complicates effective deterrence makes it very hard to anticipate either sides' decision calculus on talks, and it is not uncommon for outside intervention to harden its allies' bargaining position as they see their prospects improving rather than increasing their willingness to compromise. There is no way to ensure that airstrikes would not leave us further from a deal rather than closer, and the complexity of the situation should encourage modesty in any claims that we can fine-tune either sides' incentive structure with a bombing campaign.

Arguably a bigger challenge, however, is the post-settlement requirements for success such a strategy would create. Civil wars are difficult to settle, but many ultimately end in negotiated deals of some kind. It is far from clear that conditions in Syria today are ripe for such a deal, but the war will probably end that way some day. Such settlements, however, frequently break down in renewed violence—after all, the conflict itself often destroys any vestiges of mutual trust and creates dense webs of internecine fear, anger, and motives for revenge.[12] Where such settlements do not simply revert to open warfare in the aftermath, it is often because the presence of outside peacekeepers, in substantial numbers, stabilizes the situation and damps post-war escalatory spirals long enough for the effects of time to gradually diminish tensions.[13] Perhaps the most useful analogy to be drawn from the Dayton

[11] On Operation Storm, see *Balkan Battlegrounds: A Military History of the Yugoslav Conflict, 1990–1995*, two vols., (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2003).

[12] On settlement breakdowns and the resurgence of violence see Robert Harrison Wagner, "The Causes of Peace," in Roy Licklider, ed., *Stopping the Killing: How Civil Wars End* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), pp. 235–268; Roy Licklider, "The Consequences of Negotiated Settlements in Civil Wars, 1945–1993," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 89, No. 3 (1995): pp.681–690; Monica Duffy Toft, "Ending Civil Wars: A Case for Rebel Victory?" *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (Spring 2010), pp. 7–36; Monica Duffy Toft, *Securing the Peace: The Durability of Civil Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). On general barriers to negotiating civil war settlements see James Fearon, "Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer Than Others?" *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (2004): 275–301; Barbara F. Walter, "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement," *International Organization*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (Summer 1997): 335–364; Barbara F. Walter, *Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Barbara F. Walter, "Bargaining Failures and Civil War," *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 12 (2009): 243–61; Michaela Mattes and Burca Savun, "Information, Agreement Design, and the Durability of Civil War Settlements," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (2010): 511–524.

[13] On the importance of third-party guarantees see Walter, "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement," pp. 335–364; Caroline Hartzell, Matthew Hoddie and Donald Rothchild, "Stabilizing the Peace After Civil War" *International Organization* Vol. 55, No. 1 (2001): 183–208; Walter, *Committing to Peace;* Mattes and Savun, "Information, Agreement Design, and the Durability of Civil War Settlements," pp. 511–524. On the merits of peacekeeping and peace building more specifically see Michael Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, "International Peacebuilding: A Theoretical and Quantitative Analysis," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 94, No. 4 (December 2000); Virginia Page Fortna, "Does Peacekeeping Keep Peace: International Intervention and the Duration of Peace After Civil War," *International Studies Quarterly* Vol. 48 (2004): 269–292; Michael Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Virginia Page Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work? Shaping Belligerents' Choices after Civil War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). On the importance of peace settlements including power-sharing arrangements see Caroline Hartzell and Matthew Hoddie, "Institutionalizing Peace: Power Sharing and Post-Civil War Conflict Management," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (2003): 318–332; Caroline Hartzell and

Process in this respect is thus its peacekeeping dimension: In the immediate aftermath of the war, NATO deployed some 60,000 heavily-armed soldiers as peacekeepers, and they remained in significant numbers for years thereafter—in fact, some 600 of them remain today.[14] Even if airstrikes could catalyze negotiations, even if those negotiations succeeded, and even if the result ended the war, there would still be a need for a major and highly risky outside commitment to send ground forces to stabilize the result. It is far from clear where such a large outside peacekeeping force would come from—set aside the international financial investment needed to complete the process. Without this, even a nominally successful negotiation would be wasted. For U.S. airstrikes to be a rational component of a larger strategy for ending the war via negotiation, some strategy for stabilizing the result is thus needed, and this would require large ground force commitments that are hard to see forthcoming any time soon.

TOPPLING ASSAD

Bashar al-Assad is no friend of the United States, and his government is responsible for slaughtering tens of thousands of its own people. Many would like to see his regime fall, and many see U.S. airstrikes as a potential means to this end. It is very unlikely that a limited, short-duration air campaign could bring this about, however. A regime-changing campaign would have to be larger in scale, longer in duration, and more expensive to mount, but it is plausible that if we became effectively a co-belligerent with the rebel alliance we could eventually catalyze Assad's defeat, as we and others did to Muammar Qaddafi in Libya. Here, too, however, there are downstream problems that reduce the appeal of U.S. intervention.

Many have discussed the problem of al-Qaeda affiliated jihadists among the rebel alliance, and the danger that Assad's defeat could simply replace him with an even worse alternative in a new government sympathetic to the Jabhat al-Nusra or other jihadi elements that now fight alongside them to topple Assad. This is a very serious danger, and one that cannot be ameliorated from the air alone. The political engineering needed to create a stable, democratic, pro-Western postwar government in a country as deeply divided as Syria would be exceptionally demanding and would require a substantial political, economic, and probably military presence on the ground to succeed. This is not an agenda for a low-cost, limited engagement in Syria—and it is unclear whether even an ambitious, lavishly-funded post-war state-building program could succeed given the violent, highly-mobilized character of the war today and the atomized, disunified quality of the opposition.

Nor is it clear that toppling Assad would even end the war. On the contrary, Assad's fall could easily just change the sides and the cast of characters without even reducing the scale of violence. As we saw in Iraq, unseating a dictator does not necessarily produce peace, much less democracy. Assad's Alawite community feels deeply threatened by Syria's Sunnis and vice versa, and it is entirely possible that they would respond to an Assad collapse with an insurgency along Iraqi lines as a means of protecting themselves from Sunni overlordship. If so, the sides would change: Alawites would go from the government side to the insurgency; Syria's Sunnis would transform from insurgents to the government; but the war would continue. And if the rebel alliance failed to forge a unified governing slate, an equally likely outcome would be an atomized internecine civil war along the lines of 1990s Afghanistan, in which multiple armed factions—some Sunni, some Alawite, some Kurdish, and others none of the above—fight it out among themselves for power and influence. Even if American military force drove Assad from power, this is not tantamount to peace, democracy, or stability—in fact, it is far from clear that Syria after Assad would pose much of an improvement over Syria with Assad absent a massive outside investment in state-building and high-risk stabilization.

ENDING THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

Among the more important justifications for action the President has cited is the need to respond to the outrage of Assad's slaughter of his own people. The Syrian civil war is now among the world's most severe on-going humanitarian crises, and certainly warrants action of some kind in response.

Matthew Hoddie, *Crafting Peace: Power-Sharing Institutions and the Negotiated Settlement of Civil Wars* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2007); Charles T. Call, *Why Peace Fails: The Causes and Prevention of Civil War Recurrence* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2012).

[14] *http://www.fas.org/man/crs/93-056.htm*; *http://www.euforbih.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=15&Itemid=134*.

The problem is what kind of response to provide. Many would like the United States to do something, but it is far less clear what can be done that could actually solve the problem at a cost the American people would plausibly be willing to bear.

At a minimum, it is very unlikely that a limited program of airstrikes would end the killing. Even if these catalyzed Assad's fall, which is unlikely, it is even less likely that toppling Assad would end the violence, as noted above. It would change its contours, but the ensuing warfare could kill at least as many Syrians as today's, as Afghanistan's experience in the 1990s suggests. If we are serious about ending the killing in Syria then a far more intrusive intervention on a far larger scale will be needed. Tilting the playing field a bit from 10,000 feet is not sufficient for this purpose.

Nor is arming and equipping the rebel resistance likely to end the killing. In fact, the empirical evidence suggests the opposite: Outside support normally lengthens such wars and increases the death toll, as outside aid to one side in the war typically encourages increased aid to the other side from its respective patrons.[15] The result is often stalemate, wherein parallel escalation in assistance yields symmetrically higher firepower and more violence rather than a quick victory for either side. Unless we are prepared to simply overwhelm Iran's ability to assist Assad, aid to the rebels is thus likely to be countered by increases in Iranian (or Russian) assistance to Assad rather than ending the war quickly in the rebels' favor. In fact, as noted above, to truly end the killing would probably require foreign boots on the ground, in large numbers, to impose a settlement, enforce its terms, and stabilize the aftermath to prevent violence from returning into a security vacuum of the sort that Iraq saw after 2003. The American people seem unlikely to support this.

Without such a commitment, however, the most that the international community can really do is to stand ready to facilitate a negotiated settlement if and when the combatant parties become interested in one—and to apply the limited pressure that sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and other non-military means allow. Limited military options—whether airstrikes, arms for the rebels, or something else—may or may not accomplish anything, but they are very unlikely to end Syria's humanitarian crisis.

CONCLUSIONS

None of the objectives usually cited as motivating American air strikes on Syria are thus likely to be accomplished by a limited intervention without serious risks. The details differ from objective to objective, but the underlying theme that connects them is the problem of asymmetric stakes. Assad's existential stake in this war gives him an incentive to escalate rather than back down in the face of American attacks that threaten his hold on power—and even a limited program of air strikes nominally restricted to the prevention of CW use poses a threat to Assad's grip: if Assad fails to respond he risks being seen as weak by lieutenants he requires for his survival. Assad's survival motive, coupled with our limited interests in the conflict, restrict our ability to coerce him at a cost we can afford. This weakens the prognosis for an attack aimed at any of the objectives discussed here—whether to deter Syrian CW use, to buttress American credibility, to compel a settlement, to topple Assad, or to resolve the humanitarian crisis. All require changing Assad's interest calculus by force (and maybe others' as well) but without exceeding the limits imposed by our limited interests. If we fail to have the effect we hope on Assad's calculus, the result could easily be escalatory pressures that lead to bigger, costlier, riskier interventions than those promised at the outset—and that quickly exceed our modest objective stakes in the struggle.

It is important to emphasize, however, that there are major limits to our ability to predict Assad's actions. Perhaps we will be lucky and he will neither test our willingness to respond to further CW use nor retaliate elsewhere via proxies such as Hezbollah or allies such as Iran. After all, the Israelis struck a Syrian nuclear reactor in 2007 and the Iraqi reactor at Osirak in 1981 without either state retaliating

[15] Dylan Balch-Lindsay and Andrew J. Enterline, "Killing time: The World Politics of Civil War Duration, 1820–1992," *International Studies Quarterly*, 44 (2000): 615–42; Ibrahim Elbadawi and Nicholas Sambanis, "External Interventions and the Duration of Civil Wars." Paper presented at the workshop on the Economics of Civil Violence, March 18–19, 2000, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ; Patrick M. Regan, *Civil wars and foreign powers: Outside interventions and intrastate conflict* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000); Patrik M. Regan, "Third party interventions and the duration of intrastate conflicts," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46 (2002): 55–73; David E. Cunningham, "Blocking Resolution: How External States Can Prolong Civil Wars," *Journal of Peace Research* 47 (2010): 115–127. On the impact of third-party interventions on civilian victimization more specifically see Reed M. Wood, Jacob D. Kathman, and Stephen E. Gent, "Armed Intervention and Civilian Victimization in Intrastate Conflicts," *Journal of Peace Research* 49, 5 (2012): 647–660.

in kind; Assad might judge discretion the better part of valor and comply quietly with U.S. preferences on CW use without counterattacking or escalating. Of course the context of these attacks was very different: Assad is now locked in an existential struggle where his own reputation for resolve is under a microscope in ways it would not have been in 2007. The safest conclusion is thus surely to emphasize our limits of knowledge and prediction. But an important implication of those limits is our inability to ensure that a limited U.S. attack would succeed in any of its stated objectives. And an attack that does not succeed will surely be followed by pressures to escalate that are likely to be as great or greater than today's.

Nor does this suggest that inaction is a costless or risk-free policy, either—inaction poses risks and costs of its own. In particular, other states and especially Iran could view an American failure to make good on the President's "red line" commitment as evidence that the United States issues empty threats and lacks the will to use force. The costs of this reputational effect may be easy to exaggerate, but they are not zero. The best way to avoid this problem would have been to avoid the commitment, but what's done is done. Hence the choice is now between different kinds and scales of cost and risk to accept—not between a cost-free and a costly policy. In this context, on balance it is probably less risky to accept the cost to U.S. credibility and forgo the risk of escalation in Syria. To risk a U.S. war in Syria in order to reduce the risk of a U.S. war in Iran comes perilously close to Bismarck's famous aphorism that preventive war represents suicide from fear of death. But this is far from a panacea, and perhaps the most important implication looking forward is to be cautious in committing U.S. credibility to situations where our stakes are so much smaller than our rivals.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you, Dr. Biddle.

The Chairman now recognizes himself for questions.

Let me just say that we stand here today on the eve of September 11, a date we all remember well, not only the World Trade Center and Pentagon, but also Benghazi. Al-Qaeda is the enemy. Al-Qaeda was the one who brought down the Twin Towers.

When I look at Syria, it is a bit of a paradox because on the one hand, we have a dictator puppet of Iran using chemical weapons, and then we have the rebel forces. I think what the American people are starting to understand is, who are these rebel forces? I ask that question constantly when I get brief briefings, who are they? The reports I get is that every day, more and more of these outside groups are moving into Syria to help out the rebel forces, many of which are not in our best interests, many of which—of whom I believe are radical Islamists. While Assad is a horrible man and did horrible acts, I think the even worse outcome would be groups like these radical Islamists taking control of Syria, filling the vacuum, getting ahold of these chemical weapons and then using them, not just against Syrians but potentially against Americans. I believe that to be the greatest threat to the homeland here.

So, Mr. Joscelyn, with that, let me throw out to you the question: Who are these rebel forces?

Mr. JOSCELYN. Well, it is a complex question. There are a lot of different factions fighting inside Syria.

However, the clear trend that we have witnessed is that al-Qaeda and its affiliates and extremist allies have gotten stronger, not weaker, since late 2011, greatly. The way we judge that, the way we look at it, is we actually look at the real battles, the key battles that are being fought, and try to determine who is really leading the charge.

For example, just in the last week or so we saw this raid on Maaloula, a village northeast of Damascus, where an al-Qaeda suicide bomber, al-Nusra suicide bomber, actually was the key opening to the fight in Maaloula. He approached the security checkpoint

in Maaloula, blew up a Syrian security checkpoint, and then other forces, including al-Qaeda forces, rushed in.

I would say that sort of scenario we have witnessed over and over again. So when you say, "who are the rebels?", I think it is not as easy as saying there are extremists versus moderates. I think all of these terms are not defined, to be honest with you, including what is exactly a moderate is not defined.

But the key thing that I would emphasize here is that beyond just al-Qaeda's presence inside Syria, there are other groups which are extremist groups, including in particular Ahrar al-Sham which has tens of thousands of fighters and leads the Syrian Islamic Front, which is a key actor on the battlefield right now in Syria. They put out propaganda statements regularly saying that they are fighting alongside al-Qaeda. We can give the details down to a very granular level of how many groups are doing that.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you. I have limited time. I think the American people are asking the question should we be arming and supporting these rebels forces in light of what you just said. The idea that we are arming—and I can't get any assurance when I ask the questions, can you guarantee to me when we give these rebel forces arms and support, that it is not in turn going to go to these more extremist factions? I don't think anybody can answer that.

My next question is to General Scales. I was intrigued by your *Washington Post* article. You state there you talked to a soldier who said if you want to end this decisively, send in the troops and let them defeat the Syrian army. If the Nation doesn't think Syria is worth serious commitment, then leave them alone.

Senator Kerry just described this military operation yesterday as "unbelievably small." I believe it is a limited strike for face-saving measures. Can you tell me from a military standpoint what you think about this military option?

General SCALES. Thank you, sir.

Well, what we are going to see is a firepower strike. It will be an initial strike of 100 or so cruise missiles. We will look over the terrain to see what we missed. Maybe we will strike twice. Maybe we will strike three times, and then, after about 96 hours, we will terminate this. But by the time we strike, the Syrian Army will have had the time and the initiative, and with that much time, Congressman, they have the opportunity to radically lessen the effects of these strikes such that the effect on the Syrian Army will be substantially less than, say, if we had done this 2 weeks ago.

What are the consequences? Well, as Steve just said, it will have no real effect on the credibility, with our credibility in the world, particularly with Iran. They have got it. I believe these strikes will only serve to heighten the rage among radical Islamists. If the past is prologue, he will take his time and strike us when the time is right for him.

Sadly, I believe these strikes will have no serious military consequences on Assad because he can win this war without using chemical weapons. He already owns the initiative, and he will continue to own the initiative once these strikes are over because they won't be militarily significant enough to impact the outcome of this war, because his most effective weapons aren't chemical weapons; it is artillery and rockets, and these are virtually impossible to de-

stroy using cruise missiles from the air. So, as Steve said so eloquently, what we face is what military people call an asymmetry of ends.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you.

I am concerned it will inflame the region and retaliate not only Iran and Hezbollah against Israel but at the same time embolden and empower these rebel forces, and we have already discussed their make up and concern with them.

Congressman Shays and Dr. Biddle, my time has actually expired, but I will take the prerogative of the Chairman, if that is okay with the committee, for a few seconds here. We have had—someone called it a breakthrough, I am not sure—but the idea that Russia, that has the biggest leverage over Syria in terms of getting these chemical weapons under the international's community's hands, I personally think if there is any good outcome, this is an outcome that I would like to see pursued. As skeptical as I am of Russia, I do think we have a lot of common interests in terms of against the jihadists, and they don't want to see the weapons used either. Can you both comment on that possibility and whether you think that will be a fruitful exercise?

Mr. SHAYS. First off, the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program has proved we can work with the Soviets. When I was with Mr. Lugar in Shchuch'ye, we saw 20,000 artillery shells. One artillery shell that leaks could destroy the lives of everyone in a full stadium, and there were enough chemicals there to kill the world many times over. The Russians know the threat of chemicals, and they also have their own terrorists. They do not want terrorists to get these chemical weapons. So I believe that we can build on it.

I just would say one other thing. Let's forget about face-saving as to whether the Russians suggested this or whether we did. It doesn't matter. Get the chemicals out of Syria.

Chairman MCCAUL. Dr. Biddle, any comments?

Mr. BIDDLE. Yes. A few details have been released so far, and with this sort of proposal, obviously, the devil is always in the details. Whether or not you can actually bring under control the Syrian chemical arsenal in a very challenging operational environment is unclear.

That having been said, I think it is clearly worth considering this very seriously.

Moreover, I would set the bar for adequate effectiveness rather low. I don't think it is in the U.S. interests to strike Syria. If in fact this proposal goes nowhere and we don't get some sort of international control over all or part of the Syrian chemical inventory and you do what I would prefer, there will therefore be no effect at all on the Syrians' ability to employ chemical weapons, even an only impartially effective or largely ineffective internationalization proposal that takes some of the Syrian chemical arsenal off the battlefield or that limits their access to some part of what they own is thus better than we can get otherwise.

I think, obviously, it will matter to sort out the particulars of how it would work, but I think it is worth sorting it out.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you, Dr. Biddle.

The Chairman now recognizes the Ranking Member, Mr. Thompson.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

One of the glaring witnesses that I think we are missing is somebody from the intelligence community who can kind of back up, support, some of the things we are hearing today.

But in light of that, Congressman Shays, can you just share with me what you would assume a lot of Members have received in briefings from our intelligence communities as to this danger and how we need to act affirmatively from a response standpoint. What I am hearing is from you gentlemen is, what is the rush, and if we rush, what are the consequences for rushing?

So can you kind of help me out in this respect? Because we are being communicated to almost on an hourly basis about some of these situations.

Mr. SHAYS. First, let me say if the President really believed that a military strike would have been effective, he would have done it right away. So, obviously, he had tremendous reservations, and, unfortunately, that sent the wrong signal.

I know all of you are under a lot of pressure, but I learned a lot from my vote to go into Iraq and Afghanistan, and I have learned a lot about the effectiveness of a strike that is being contemplated. In the end, it is a tactic without a strategy, and so we have to determine—you have to determine—what is really our strategy? I believe in all the briefings that I have ever received as a Member of Congress that the biggest threat is that a terrorist organization will get a chemical weapon and be willing to go up with the chemical weapon and come into New York City, go into San Francisco, whatever, and the consequences of that are huge.

So I believe that the kind of briefings that you would get if you really pursued it is, do not let these chemical weapons get in the hands of terrorists. I will say something about the terrorists. We are being told that the bad guys are now kind of not on the battlefield. Well, it reminds me of Mao Zedong with Chiang Kai-Shek. Chiang Kai-Shek fought the Japanese and Mao Zedong prepared for the next government. That is a strategy, and I think we have to recognize that.

Mr. THOMPSON. General Scales, do you have a comment on that?

General SCALES. I absolutely agree with the Congressman on this, sir. Ultimately, the strategic end-state of what hopefully is about to happen is an opportunity to remove these horrible weapons from Syria. It almost doesn't matter who uses them, whether it is the Syrian Army or whether the insurgents manage to get these weapons to some distant place. In either case, innocents will die and, as the Congressman said, will die in the thousands.

The sad part to me, however, is that even if we are able to control these stockpiles, Assad will continue to kill his people with conventional weapons, and I presume it is just as horrible to die from a bullet as it is from sarin gas, and this sectarian civil war, like a forest fire, will continue to burn itself out as one Syrian kills another Syrian. This sad, sad war could possibly last for decades.

Mr. THOMPSON. In light of what the general just said, Dr. Biddle, what considerations do you think should be on the table to address the conflict in Syria?

Mr. BIDDLE. I think there are things we can do at relatively low cost to ourselves that are certainly worth doing, most of which we have already done. There are already a variety of economic sanctions in place against the Syrian regime. We have already isolated the Syrians and their allies diplomatically. We have already pledged to provide light weapons and ammunition to the Syrian resistance.

The things that we have already done I think constitute reasonable responses. I am not sure that there is a lot that I would support beyond those things because I am very skeptical about the ability of any of the more forceful things we could do to actually bring about our objectives at a cost that we would be willing to bear, and I don't think the strategic calculus of the decision is all that sensitive to, for example, details of what the intelligence base is and what we do or don't know about the whereabouts or disposition of Syrian chemical weapons.

I think ultimately the problem here is a basic interest asymmetry that limits the ability of small actions on our part to bring about big effects at low cost. I think it is very hard to avoid the iron relationship in the interests of the two sides here with any of the initiatives that I am aware of.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you.

I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chairman now recognizes the gentleman from Texas, the Chairman of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee, Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, a week ago Saturday, on August 31, the President said, "We cannot resolve the underlying military conflict with our military." It seems to me that that is an argument in opposition to military action, not in favor of military action. I also wonder about the administration's stated policy not to try to effectuate regime change. I assume that is because we don't trust either side. But if there is no regime change, Assad still will have the capability or be tempted to use chemical weapons. But if we don't have regime change and Assad can still use chemical weapons again, why commit our Armed Forces to an uncertain goal with few allies and no friends on either side of another country's civil war?

That leads to my first question I would like to address to Congressman Shays, General Scales, and Dr. Biddle, and it is this: Why is the administration, why is the President unable to persuade an international coalition to support our military strikes?

General SCALES. Thank you, sir, for the question. There are a couple of reasons.

Mr. SMITH. Did Congressman Shays want to pass that on to you?

Mr. SHAYS. I thought he should start.

Mr. SMITH. Okay. General Scales.

General SCALES. Sir, a couple of reasons, I think. First of all, there is a latent distrust of American motives in the rest of the world. We have been at war for 10 years in the Middle East and a great many folks are nervous about American involvement in this civil war.

Second, quite frankly, just as our citizens are divided on this, our closest allies, as we have learned recently in Great Britain, and

also in France, Germany, the European Union, and elsewhere, are extremely reluctant to have anyone engage in any war.

The final reason I will give you is the military answer. The bottom line is simply this: If they wanted to engage or if they wanted to support us, the United States military today is the only military capable of taking any type of significant action that might result in an outcome in the civil war. The rest of the world has disarmed, and they can only stand by and watch.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, General Scales.

Dr. Biddle.

Mr. BIDDLE. Certainly, there is great skepticism about American motives and American purposes, whether in Syria or elsewhere in important parts of the world, but there is also a general problem that we face in trying to assemble coalitions of the willing of this kind and then a specific problem for Syria.

The general problem is it is very attractive for others to free ride and pass the buck. If they think someone else will act, that reduces substantially the incentives on their part to act. That is a problem that we face in assembling coalitions of this kind on all sorts of issues.

The specific problem with respect to Syria is largely the one that we have been discussing this morning, and that is the absence of attractive options for action that could actually bring about any of the coalition's objectives at a cost that any members of the coalition are willing to bear. I think many of our prospective allies share the assessment of some on the panel about the prognosis of military action in Syria and are reluctant to start for that reason.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Dr. Biddle.

Mr. Joscelyn, a couple of questions to you.

Mr. SHAYS. Could I respond to this question as well?

Mr. SMITH. I thought you were passing.

Mr. SHAYS. I just wanted time to think about it. We sent a message years ago when we turned our back on the Shah of Iran, for whatever reason. We sent a message when we told Qaddafi, if you give us your chemicals and other weapons, we will back off. We sent a message with Mubarak. They were people that we had said certain things to. We sent a message to the generals in Iraq. We said, when we were invading Iraq, we said if you turn east and don't fight us, you will still have a place. Then we disassembled them when we came. So people really question our word, and it goes beyond one administration to the other.

The other is that, I don't know how you felt, but when I voted for the war in Iraq, I believed there were weapons of mass destruction, wrong, shouldn't have done it. But based on that. But even if I thought there were weapons of mass destruction, if I thought we would have fought the war we did and allow the looting to disassemble folks who were major players, I wouldn't have voted for the war. My point is people aren't sure we know how to fight this war.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Shays.

Mr. Joscelyn, real quickly, is there a danger that rebels associated with al-Qaeda will benefit from a military strike? The second question is: What percentage of the rebels do you think are associ-

ated with al-Qaeda? I think Secretary Kerry admitted that at least 25 percent might be.

Mr. JOSCELYN. I will take the second question first. I think Secretary Kerry said between 15 and 25 percent. We don't know what the basis is for that estimate. We track the brigades that are fighting in Syria very closely. I would say that what we find are that there are a number of brigades that aren't technically al-Qaeda that fight alongside them so it sort of increases the size of their Army inside Syria. I would say that I think that 15 to 25 percent is probably too low in terms of who the actual extremist forces are inside Syria right now with al-Qaeda and its allies.

In terms of benefiting—the potential to benefit al-Qaeda's affiliates inside Syria, none of the strikes as they have been defined to me, I don't know specifically what is on the table in terms of strikes, so I can't know specifically what they would do, but there is certainly a potential to harm one side and not the other. When al-Qaeda is playing a leading charge on the other side, the potential is there.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Joscelyn.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chairman now recognizes the gentlelady from Texas, Ms. Sheila Jackson Lee.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I thank the Chairman, and I thank the Ranking Member for his courtesies in moving this hearing forward, and I know that each Member will count this as an important contribution to their ultimate decision as relates to the serious situation in Syria.

Some of us have taken to meeting with Syrian Americans in our Congressional districts. We know that there is a divide even among them, but many of them believe that something has to be done to cease the slaughter.

I am glad, Dr. Biddle, that you mentioned that the administration has over the years done—has engaged and provided resources, humanitarian and other resources, to the rebels that were established to receive such, and so to discount anyone's suggestion that nothing has been done.

For those of us who have been troubled by war and are still undecided, the one thing that I would hope that we don't dismiss, and I don't believe it has been said, except for general comment, the heinousness of the impact of chemical warfare and the devastating video of the death of children, which I think has touched the President's heart. I would take issue on this question of credibility of this administration. It is constantly raised, and I believe that it has no place for in discussions with representatives from international countries, foreign countries, it is often said that America is the greatest country in the world, and we can solve every problem. So for a country that doesn't have credibility, it seems interesting that foreign nations still look to America to solve problems. I think we do ourselves well to wash our mouth with soap about our credibility. America still stands as a country that can be effective.

The President's concern, and turning back to Congress, I believe, is a reflection of his own history. There is nothing shameful about that and I hope that we would give credibility to the idea that the

President is consulting with Congress regardless of where we stand.

Let me also put on the record that this issue with Russia was raised more than 2 or 3 years ago regarding the idea of capturing the chemical weapons. It does matter who raised it first. It has been characterized as a Russian offer. I have no ego problem with that. Neither does America. I think the question has to be as to whether or not Russia is serious. We want diplomacy. We wanted it 2 years ago. We wanted it when we took resolutions to the United Nations four times and Russia vetoed it in July 19, 2012; March 8, 2012; February 4, 2012; October 4, 2011; they vetoed it. Russia is not the shining knight on a horse. But I do hope that we can have the opportunity for a concrete resolution and have it by this week because diplomacy does save lives, but lives were lost due to chemical weapons.

So, let me ask this question, I take issue with, I do think that the backdrop of the Iraq war, which I proudly voted against, was really the taint that brought us to where we are today. I think America's credibility was severely damaged there, and I think the point made about the Baath generals was true. Unfortunately, we did not adhere to our word. But I take issue with the fact that our credibility is in shambles. People make their decisions on their own political interests, and we know that on the international forum.

So let me ask this question to all of you.

In the heinousness or the possession or the question of the possession of chemical weapons, do you believe that a resolution that would include the securing of the chemical weapons, that would include the international community, because I do believe that if this is real that Russia and the United States can agree to the international community will come together?

France is taking a resolution to the United Nations, as I hope soon, and the question will be what will be the results. But I ask the question: No. 1, can you state for anyone who wants to do it how heinous the use of chemical weapons is and that that does bring a question of National security interest, and No. 2, what kind of securing of those weapons would make you come comfortable and that we truly have a resolution, may not end the Syrian conflict, which I believe should be done peaceably and through negotiation, but what, how important do you think that would be?

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you, Congresswoman Lee, for your great question and your comment. I think the worst thing we can do is get in a battle over who thought of this first. As you know, if you don't care who gets the credit, you get a lot more done. Right now, whatever it takes to get the Russian government to support getting chemicals out of Syria should be our task. Frankly, I think that it does no good even for Congress in the end to focus too much on the President right now because he needs to get as much support as he can get so he can help marshal the support of others.

General SCALES. I absolutely agree with the Congressman. Someone said the other day, well, there is just no way you are going to get 1,000 tons of chemical weapons out of Syria in a short period of time. My view is any effort to get any chemical weapons out of Syria no matter how long it takes and no matter how much resolve is necessary is worth the effort. Because to your point, when you

use chemical weapons against innocents, that elevates the brutality of the conflict, and it also, frankly, endangers the homeland. So if it is imperfect, if it takes a long time, my view is, do it, because it is worth it and, in the end, will save lives both in places like Syria and here at home.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Chairman——

Chairman MCCAUL. I will allow Mr. Joscelyn.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I would greatly appreciate it. Mr. Joscelyn, if you could also talk to the brutality or the impact of chemical weapons on children that at least the video showed, and Mr. Chairman, just I appreciate witnesses' comment, just one comment——

Chairman MCCAUL. And I appreciate that we have a lot of Members and a lot of questions.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. This is not who gets credit; this is to recognize that we are working together on the issue of chemical weapons.

Chairman MCCAUL. Let the witness make his remarks.

Mr. JOSCELYN. Well, just, real quick, to your point about the sort of politics of the whole thing. David Sanger, I believe it was, in the *New York Times* had a great piece about how the administration is going back years now, including the Bush years and before, have really not done enough to secure the chemical weapons that the Syrian government was pursuing through international means, whether it be its partnership with Russia or others. So this has been a problem that has been decades in the making, not just in recent times.

This is something that there has not been a significant enough effort to really curtail what the Syrian government and Assad regime was doing there. To your point about brutality of weapons, I review every day al-Qaeda's Facebook pages, websites, social media, everything else. One of the big things they are using right now in their recruiting is the horrific pictures of these children that have been killed by these chemical weapons in Damascus and elsewhere, and they are using it to talk about the horrors of it.

The other side in this fight is actually using this because of how horrible they are to say, you know, come support us against Assad because of the horror of the chemical weapons.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chairman now recognizes the gentleman from New York, Mr. King, the former Chairman of the Homeland Security Committee.

Mr. KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for holding this hearing and I will probably be a minority of maybe 1 today in that I do believe that action should be taken in Syria, but I have great respect for all the witnesses. Congressman Shays and I worked together for many years, and he was an outstanding Member of this committee. General Scales and Mr. Joscelyn has been a witness before this committee, when I was Chairman in fact.

My concern is that on several counts, one if Syria, if no action is taken to degrade Syria, you have this access between Syria and Iran in that region of the world and this will greatly embolden and strengthen that access, which is why Israel supports us taking action in this case, which is why Jordan supports us taking action in this case, and they are the two nations most involved over there.

General Scales you were saying that sectarian civil wars, that they can't be ended by third parties. I was here when we voted on Bosnia back in 1995, and that was looked upon as a centuries-old civil war. The fact is, after 3 weeks of American action, that was brought to a close, and for the most part, for the last 18 years, there has been a, if not peace, at least a modus operandi, at least a semblance of stability in Bosnia. I also I want to say that may have prevented Islamic militants from taking a hold in Bosnia, which they had threatened to do in Sarajevo at that time.

Also the question of credibility, I am not looking at the question of saving face, but I think if the President of the United States does lay down a red line and then a year goes by and a red line is crossed and then without ever mentioning Congress being involved at all, very last minute, he says Congress should be involved, that is a wavering. When he says it is not his red line, it is a wavering.

I think it is important that we maintain credibility, not for the sake of saving face but for credibility, not just for enemies like Iran but also for our allies. For instance, we have persuaded Israel not to attack Iran in their nuclear development because we have assured them if they cross a red line, we will prevent that from happening. But the fact is that if Israel sees that we allow Syria to cross a red line on chemical weapons, why should Israel trust us to prevent Iran from crossing the red line on nuclear weapons?

Also, there has been talk of we should have an international coalition. That on paper sounds good. I remember Kosovo, we had 21 nations involved in a coalition; 21 nations involved in a coalition, it was entirely air strikes. The United States carried out 95 percent of them; the British carried out 5 percent. The reality of the world we live in, whether we like it or not, is the United States is the only military power capable of carrying out any type of effective military action. So while it looks good on paper and it would sound good, the fact is not having a military coalition with this doesn't mean that much.

The other concern I have is with, and believe me, I appreciate all the points you are making. This is not an easy call. When we saw Russia coming in, it is not a question of giving credit; Sadat put Russia out of the Middle East 40 years ago. Other than that one-on-one relationship with Syria, there is not any real Russian involvement in the Middle East.

Do we want to now bring Russia back in and establish them as a major power in the Middle East, maybe even a veto power over our actions?

I know, General, you said that even if it is a long effort to get out the chemical weapons, it should be done. I agree with that. But because it could be such a long effort, couldn't that indicate the Russians are not serious about it? If you do have a thousand tons, if you do have 50 locations, if you do have a civil war going on, and you would need thousands and thousands of U.N. inspectors to come in, it makes it almost impossible. So, by the time we realize that, time has gone by and our threat of military action will have passed.

So, again, I think we should explore it, examine it, but keep in mind that having Russia as a major player in the Middle East could have long-term consequences.

Also, as far as the terrorist groups, and I am not trying to set one committee against the other, I know on the Intelligence Committee meeting with people in the intelligence community, they say they are reasonably confident—I am not saying it is right because, as we know, there has been wrong intelligence before, but they can separate out the terrorists, the Islamic groups from the more mainstream moderates if you will and that we could arm the mainstream groups, prevent those weapons from going to the terrorist groups, and if this set of bombing attacks could force Syria to go to the negotiating table, that would give us more leverage to isolate out and screen out the terrorist groups during those negotiations.

Now, on balance, that is the reason I am for it. Any of you I would ask General Scales I guess and any of you want to comment on any of the points I made, not that they are particularly profound, but I would be interested in your thoughts because I have tremendous respect for all of you. Thank you.

General SCALES. If I could answer first sir. First of all, I feel a little bit self-conscious about arguing with you because we have had these conversations for years.

But let me just make a very brief statement. Nations should not go to war for credibility, for issues like honor or for esoteric ends. Nations commit acts of war for a specific achievable strategic end; to quote Dave Petraeus, "tell me how this ends." If we can't come up with a path to success, then merely committing an act of war to maintain, establish, or reestablish our credibility, I think is a wrong strategic objective.

I think what I just said, sir, really reflects the sentiments of the American people because it doesn't resonate with them that what is in it for us, terrible as this war may be, please explain how this ends.

Mr. KING. I know my time is expired, but General Petraeus has endorsed this proposal. He has over the weekend come out in support of it, and I would say the overall strategy is not just to save credibility for the sake of saving face but to reassure countries like Israel that we will stand with them when the moment comes.

I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chairman will now recognize the gentleman from New York, Mr. Higgins.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, I want to recognize Congressman Chris Shays, a gentleman I had the honor of serving with, one of the most thoughtful Members of Congress. As a new Member of Congress in 2006, we traveled the Middle East, nine countries in 11 days. In fact, Nick Palarino was with us. We were in the refugee camps in Darfur. We were in Lebanon, in Israel, in the aftermath of the Hezbollah Israeli war, so I have always had great regard for Chris Shays, and I want to welcome him back.

Let me also say this at the outset. The situation in Syria is that of a national civil war. It is sectarian, and it is ethnic. This is not about freedom and democracy. There is no social contract. There is no preamble. There is no unifying vision for what Syria wants to

become. This is a fight about control, a brutal dictator, Assad and his militias, and an opposition, who is represented, their best fighters are al-Qaeda and Islamic extremists bent on creating an Islamist state in Syria. So there is no good military option for the United States.

But there is an issue I want to address, which has been referenced here and throughout this debate. It is that America's credibility is on the line in Syria, that America's credibility is on the line in Syria. Really?

Not the America that I know. Not my America. The international community, 194 countries, an international community, but for Turkey and France, that says, yes, we agree with you, the United States, Assad is a toxic murderer, go get him. Just don't ask us to participate.

So the United States will enter another regional civil war for the third time in the past decade, essentially alone, again.

The Arab League, 22 member states in the Arab world, whose strategic interests are tied to the stability of the region, their response to Assad's murderous ways are convoluted and weak, pathetically weak. You are telling me America's credibility is on the line in Syria?

The Arab Muslim world, a civilization of 250 million people who have been in a destructive war with each other Shia and Sunni about who is the rightful successor to the prophet Mohammed's political and spiritual leadership since 632, the Seventh Century. The Arab Muslim community is a population of 250 million people, one half of which are under the age of 25. So Shia and Sunni are involved in a sectarian conflict against each other without any regard for the future of the children in that community. America's credibility is on the line?

Finally, the American people, the American people are sick and tired of war. Afghanistan and Iraq is as violent and as backward as it has ever been, $2 trillion, 6,668 American lives lost, tens of thousands of young men and women coming back to this country both physically and mentally destroyed. America is underachieving. What the American people want is a strong, prosperous America. Richard Haass wrote the book, "Foreign Policy Begins at Home."

We have to build nations not in Afghanistan, not in Iraq, not nation-building in those places, but nation-build right here at home, investing in the American people, in the American economy. There are no good options for the United States.

I heard a spokesman from the White House say today, that, why are the people—well, it is complicated. That is insulting. That is insulting.

The American people are way ahead of Washington on this issue. They do not want a war in another part of the world that we cannot win, that we cannot litigate toward a successful end. They want to nation-build in America. So I just think it is important that we say that. America's credibility is not on the line. We are the greatest Nation in the history of the world. We have demonstrated greater generosity to the international community than they will ever respond to us.

So let's stop this nonsense about Americans' credibility is on the line in Syria.

With that, I will yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAUL. I thank the gentleman.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Meehan, is recognized.

Mr. MEEHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank this distinguished panel for being here today at a time in which the discussions taking place in Washington are certainly broader than many that we have, I have had the privilege to participate in during the course of my now second term in Congress, but I thank each of you for your service as well.

We have had a lot of discussions about the implications with regard to what is happening in Syria itself. But I am mindful, I chair a committee on, a subcommittee of this committee that deals with the issues of cyber and the cyber threat. One of the realities of the tremendous network that we have created by virtue of the internet is the recognition that we have been globally connected, and therefore, an avenue of activity and accessibility leads into every fundamental institution of the American way of being, from industry to daily communications that we are taking place.

One of the things that was used by a colleague in a matter just the other day was a Newton's law to every action, there is going to be a reaction. While I know that we have spent a lot of time analyzing what the rationale and purpose might be of any kind of activity, it is also important to go two steps down the line in the chessboard and determine what happens as a result of anything that take place.

We are aware that in the course of recent weeks, we have had a group, the Syrian Electronic Army; Assad himself has had a history of awareness and connection to cyber.

Now, most of the assessments that I have read seem to identify a group that is probably no more malicious than Anonymous or others. They have found sort of back-door ways of getting involved and using things likes spear phishing and other kinds of avenues to create changes of things that are on pages of newspapers.

But I am concerned, and I want to have the assessment of those of you who think about actions and then think about actions two or three steps and recognizing the fundamental structure of our cyber. Is it not foreseeable that that could be an avenue for reaction in the event that any kind of a step is taken? I would like to have you address that, not just in the focus of Syria themselves, because my greatest concern here is Iran, and a recognition that much of what may be happening in Syria today is happening because of its relationship or enabled by virtue of its relationship with Iran and the resources Iran has brought to the table.

There is absolutely no question about the far more serious capabilities of Iran, including its capacity to influence things with out-of-service attacks and others. We saw what they did in with Aramco in Saudi Arabia, attacking 30,000 computers and shutting them down and affecting the ability for that oil industry to operate.

Is it not foreseeable that in the event of a military action in Syria there is a possibility, and how likely is it possible that an act could be carried back into the United States utilizing all of the methods of subterfuge and cover and other things in which cyber becomes a new area for warfare and one in which the United

States itself may be subjected to greater vulnerability than many people appreciate? Congressman, I would love for you to——

Mr. SHAYS. Congressman, this is a huge issue. Ranking Member Thompson and your Chairman have said how important it is. I really believe they are separate issues, primarily because you can do cyber terrorism without there being a trail. I believe Iran and other countries will do whatever they can regardless of what we do in Syria.

Mr. MEEHAN. General, your thoughts on this.

General SCALES. Well, I am a technological troglodyte, and I am probably the last person to answer your questions. I think cyber is important, and Keith Alexander is one of my best friends. But don't get too distracted by this. Cyber is an ancillary means of warfare that is used to distract an enemy rather than to destroy him. Is it serious? Of course, it is serious. But if we went to war with Iran, and the result was a nuclear weapon in New York City or someone releasing a couple hundred pounds of sarin in the New York City subway, then the discussion would probably move pretty quickly away from cyber and more into the more kinetic and frightful aspects of war.

Mr. MEEHAN. But do you think that shutting down of the 30,000 computers and the attack that took place in Saudi Arabia was just an inconvenience, or was that an act of war?

General SCALES. I don't think it was an act of war. I think it was beyond inconvenience. I think it is somewhere in between. But you know, I had an old first sergeant in Vietnam the used to say to me, sir, the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. The main thing we have to worry about with Syria is to keep chemical weapons away from our shores.

Mr. MEEHAN. I know, Mr. Chairman, my time is expired, just whether either of the other two panelists have any comments regarding that question.

Mr. BIDDLE. I guess all I would add is that one of the more important features of cyber is the ability to act in a limited way that does not generate massive retaliation from the target. That says something about the degree of concern that we should have in the larger context of threats that we face.

If Syria or Iran, for example, were to use cyber, they would probably, (A) make an effort to conceal their involvement in it and, (B) make an effort to make sure that they don't actually kill large numbers of Americans, because were they to do either of those things, were their fingerprints to be too clear or were the pain level they were to inflict on Americans were too great, then our interests would be fully engaged, and we are militarily capable of doing terrible things to either country.

So my guess is that the likely nature of the cyber response will be designed to be moderate enough to keep it under what they expect to be an American retaliatory threshold.

Mr. MEEHAN. My time is expired, and I thank you for your observations.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Payne, is recognized.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and to the distinguished panel, we have here a good friend of my

father's for many years. They served together. It is great to have Congressman Shays here.

I just want to start with something that the point the Congressman made when he went back and talked about our experience the prior decade with WMDs and knowing what we know now how that information turned out not to be factual. That is why the American people are where they are today on this issue because of their experience in past conflicts in the last decade.

So I don't blame them. They have been sent down a road and told things that exist that they found out never existed. So they are wary.

I think that this new third option that has opened up in the last day is promising and potentially could keep us out of this conflict to the degree that looked like we were going.

But I want to ask the question that was on my mind because I was still had been undecided and giving the President an opportunity to make his case. My constituents have made it loud and clear where they expect me to be, but I felt that it is only right to give the President the opportunity to make his case.

I don't think—and, General, you talked about the length of time that we have been involved in this and them having the opportunity to move their chemical weapons around and what have you, and I think that with the technology that we have, we are able to follow them fairly well in everything they are doing from vantage points high up in the sky.

So I wasn't as concerned as the Syrian response as I was to if Russian nationals, technicians, people working there in Syria were killed and what that retaliation would be.

I know that the Russians moved two of their ships into the area, and what would their response be? So that was the thing that concerned me more, the escalation of Russian nationals being harmed in that theater.

What is your take on that?

General SCALES. Well, I think there are two groups that we need to be concerned about. Certainly, the Russians, I think I heard the figure 25,000 Russians, but I have also heard the figure 10- to 15,000 United Nations humanitarian workers who are now in Syria. Once you loose the dogs of war, you never know how this is going to end, Congressman.

I remember very well a cruise missile striking the Chinese embassy in 1999 and the effects of all that. Precision weapons are precise, but they are not perfect, particularly if your targeting is not so good. So I think your caution and your concern is spot-on.

The second and third order of effects of any act of war are always unpredictable, and I would argue with you, almost without exception, it is harder, bloodier, longer, more costly, and more debilitating after you go in than it is before you go in.

Mr. PAYNE. Then to the, you know, to the strike itself and you said the potential 100 cruise missiles being used in doing the initial attack and then assessing where you are and then finishing it up, I think when we talk about small and limited, I think that is relative. I think you know 100 cruise missiles in this area and then looking where we are in over a 4-, 5-day period, I think we could

do major—even though we call it limited, it is relative based on the size and our capability.

General SCALES. That is right. If you are underneath one of those cruise missiles when it goes off, it is certainly not limited. But recall that we fired 248 cruise missiles against Libya over however many days, along with many, many other types of ordnance, and it took a while to get that done. We talked earlier about Kosovo and Serbia. Remember that was a 78-day campaign, 78 days, and a lot of people were killed in that effort. So the odds of hurting the wrong people and killing the innocents in a war like this can't be discounted.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chairman now recognizes the Chairman of the Oversight and Management Efficiency Subcommittee, Mr. Duncan from South Carolina.

Mr. DUNCAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thanks for the timeliness of this hearing, entitled "Crisis in Syria: Implications to Homeland Security." I am going to try to keep the focus on homeland security, but I would be remiss if I didn't talk a little bit about Benghazi from the simple standpoint that we heard from the administration yesterday in a classified briefing about their levels of certainty about the use of chemical weapons and the level of certainty that they believe the Assad regime did that.

I am just baffled by the fact that we can come up with that level of certainty when we can't identify the perpetrators in Benghazi that killed four Americans when we had personnel, U.S. personnel on the ground involved in that attack, we had eyes in the sky with Predator drones watching the thing unfold, but yet we can come up with a level of certainty that Assad was involved in the chemical weapons attack in Syria.

So, in my time in Congress, I have focused my attention on Iran and Hezbollah's deepening relations with countries here in this hemisphere. Terrorist groups specifically aligned with Iran have publicly stated their intent to attack the U.S. embassy in Iraq as well as within the U.S. homeland if Syria is attacked.

I would caution America that Hezbollah and its possible sleeper cells could launch some sort of retaliatory attacks here in the Western Hemisphere, and so I raise that awareness.

I want to thank the gentleman and the panelists for your comments today.

General Scales, I think you are spot-on. I think your opening testimony was heart-warming and spot-on with regard to the threats that we do face.

The question I have for you is: How long has Syria had chemical weapons?

General SCALES. Congressman, Syria's possession of chemical weapons goes all the way back to the days of the Cold War, when the elder Assad assumed that the only way he could have a reasonable retaliation against Israel's possession of nuclear weapons was for him to have an overwhelming stockpile of chemical weapons as a sort of retaliatory means.

The problem, of course, is that he just went completely nuts in getting chemical weapons; the figure, unclassified figure I have seen is 1,000 tons.

Mr. DUNCAN. It is a bunch, and it is not a relatively new phenomenon that he has had those. So how long has a civil war in Syria been raging?

General SCALES. Oh since, almost 2½ years now.

Mr. DUNCAN. About 30 months maybe. So we have had a 30-month long civil war, you have got 1,200 different rebel fighting groups in and around Syria, not just centrally-located in one geographic region because it is a civil war. So 1,200 different rebel fighting groups, 1,000 tons of chemical weapons; based on the testimony today, we understand that the terrorists or terrorist cells already have chemical weapons. Whether they were apprehended by the Turks or whether they were apprehended by the Iraqis, evidence points to the terrorists having some access to sarin gas. I am not saying that that they used it in Syria. What I am trying to, the point I am trying to bring out is the fact that if this is about keeping the chemical weapons out of the hands of the terror cells, we are a little late, because the evidence points that they are already have some hopefully minimal amount of chemical weapons.

So the question I have is: How will a military action by the United States, acting unilaterally at this point or with very little international backing, keep the terrorists from gaining access to chemical weapons?

Yes, sir, and then I will go to Mr. Shays.

General SCALES. In my opinion, in a word, it won't.

Mr. DUNCAN. Congressman.

Mr. SHAYS. It would make it more likely that if we weaken this regime, that the terrorist elements will be more likely to get it. The argument, though, that some is already out is just like a wake-up call to get and work overtime to get these chemicals out of Syria.

Mr. DUNCAN. So I ask you gentlemen would it not have been better versus beating the drums of war and possibly going at this unilateral striking and punish Assad for his use or perceived use of chemical weapons, would it have not been better to start working with our international community in the international court of public opinion to build a coalition based around the signatory countries to the chemical weapons convention?

Mr. SHAYS. Absolutely.

Mr. DUNCAN. And say: Look, let's have economic sanctions, let's have a blockade of Syria, let's cut off their ability to be resupplied, let's really punish him in a lot of ways, versus the United States standing up and saying we are going to go in there and strike, but we have no idea what the results of this strike is going to be. We have no idea what the retaliatory strikes will be whether Israel will be attacked themselves by Assad or whether other countries will be drug into this, whether Assad actually launches an attack on the United States Navy sitting 250 kilometers off the coast with their surface-to-surface missiles. There are a lot of dominoes that are ugly to fall if we go after this alone and if we go after Assad's chemical weapons, without a real plan of attack, without an end-game in mind, and then do the terrorists actually gain further access to these chemical weapons? Do they bring to the Western

Hemisphere and do they launch a retaliatory attack against the homeland? The focus of this hearing is implications to homeland security.

I think the implications are not pretty and so I urge caution while these winds of war blow.

I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. I thank the gentleman.

The gentleman from Texas, Mr. O'Rourke, is recognized.

Mr. O'ROURKE. I want to thank the Chairman and the Ranking Member for making this hearing today possible. Ostensibly, we are talking about implications for homeland security, but I think foremost in all of our minds is that we have been asked to make what for me in my 8 months as a freshman Member will be the toughest vote I have had to make and maybe for Members who have been here for many more terms. So this is perhaps the most solemn responsibility we have as a country and certainly as Representatives of our constituents on whether or not we go to war.

I wish that every Member of Congress could hear the testimony that each of you gave today. I think it has been incredibly helpful to put the decision in perspective and to make sure that whatever we choose to do, and many people have said today reasonable people can disagree, and I have heard compelling arguments on both sides, but whatever we choose to do, that we make the most informed intelligent decision possible and fully to the best of our ability understand the ramifications of that decision.

But, as the General said, war is perhaps the most unpredictable of human endeavors. For me, it is hard to get past that. The assurances that whatever we do will be perfectly calibrated to dissuade Assad from using chemical weapons while not destabilizing him enough to allow al-Qaeda-affiliated rebel groups to dominate the battlefield and perhaps obtain those chemical weapons, it is hard to believe that, not because of a credibility issue; it is because war is unpredictable inherently.

I think you made that case very well, General.

Dr. Biddle said something that I thought was very important, and that is that this idea that the international community and the member countries can pass the buck on these tough issues. Following the financial meltdown, we talked about a moral hazard here in the United States that we created, where financial institutions could do really whatever they wanted, however irresponsibly, because ultimately, the Government and the U.S. taxpayer was going to be there to pick up the buck.

I feel like something like that is happening in the international community. I think the President at a news conference said that the leader of a smaller country had approached him at the summit and had commiserated with him and said, you know, Mr. President in my country, no one expects to do anything, and so I really have a free ride on this issue.

So, with that being said, and Mr. Higgins mentioned that we are dealing with battles that have been going on since the Seventh Century and certainly, in modern times, since the fall of the Ottoman Empire, what is our role within the international community to address this specific crisis and also to remove that moral hazard and create the will for the international community to respond to

this and other crises that are certainly to rise in the near future? How do we lead in this way nonmilitarily?

Mr. BIDDLE. I think the natural way forward is to do much of what we have been doing for the last several years in Syria. We have in fact been quite active in trying to generate international economic sanctions against the Syrian regime, again in trying to isolate the Syrian regime diplomatically. This strikes me as an entirely appropriate way forward. We have been trying to play a role, at times together with Russians, in facilitating a negotiated settlement to the war.

These things strike me as entirely appropriate. I think the administration deserves some credit for having pursued them. I think they are rather unlikely to bring about our objectives, unfortunately. My guess is that, at the end of the day, the situation in Syria is bad, will probably get worse, and what our scale and scope of options for making it any better are unfortunately rather limited. But I think that the best ones in many ways lie along the lines that we have just been discussing as limited in efficacy as they are likely to be.

Mr. O'ROURKE. Congressman Shays, General Scales said we are operating in a strategy-free zone. What is your advice to Members of Congress and how we can constructively work towards developing a strategy with the international community?

Mr. SHAYS. I love the word "constructively." One is, you know, we have an opportunity to work with the Russians. We have proven we can do it in the elimination of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. We need to go into this expecting we will succeed. We should be going throughout the world saying we accept the offer of the Russians to do this, and then if the Russians fail to come through, the rest of the world will know we gave it a shot, and it was the Russians' fault, and they will be far more sympathetic to other types of action. But it can be done. But you start by knowing it can be done.

Mr. O'ROURKE. I appreciate that my time is up, but I want to say thank you again for everyone who testified today.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chairman now recognizes the Chairwoman of the Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications Subcommittee, Mrs. Brooks from Indiana.

Mrs. BROOKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you very much to you and the Ranking Member for hosting this very important meeting. I want to thank all the witnesses for your time.

As Chairwoman of the Committee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications, I am very interested and concerned in hearing about what your thoughts will be, and I actually don't think there has been enough discussion in the briefings that I have attended, and I have attended a few now, on what the potential retaliatory strikes might be and what the international backlash might be and how we should prepare for that.

We have been very focused on convincing everyone that Assad perpetrated these crimes, and I am convinced and believe that we do have the evidence that it was the regime.

I, too, have met with Syrian Americans in my district, and they have told me for months about the horrible crimes that the Assad regime has been perpetrating against his own people.

But yet once—I am not convinced that we have a strategy with respect to the chemical weapons, the disposition. A Pentagon report in 2012 said it could take 75,000 U.S. troops on the ground to secure the chemical weapons, and so the dispersement of the chemical weapons I think continues to be of grave concern.

But yet beyond that and what others have mentioned, Iran's possible retaliatory strike and others, I am curious what your thoughts are about what we should be anticipating after we institute a strike, and we are not talking about that very much. I ask it from each of your perspectives.

Mr. SHAYS. Well, I go under the assumption, first, that Assad is a smart person. He has to know that if these chemicals get dispersed around the country, they could get in the wrong hands, even in his country, and be used against him. I would think we would be doing him a hell of a gift to get them out of the country. There is a part of me who thinks he may think that, too. I have a feeling that the Russians will be making that argument.

In terms of all the other types of things that could happen, we don't really know because I think we have talked about a tactic and not thought about the strategy. If you think about the strategy and then figure out where the tactics sit, then you think about the negatives that could occur from it and also the positives.

Mrs. BROOKS. Thank you.

General SCALES. Very briefly, I absolutely agree with the Congressman. We don't know how this ends because we don't have an end-state that we can anticipate. There are so many consequence, post-strike consequences, that we can't even begin to speculate on what they will be. All we can say is that it can't be good for us. A small strike that merely rattles the Syrians, leaves Assad in power, the army is still the strongest military force in the region. After the strike when we have this vacuum, the resistance is going to be dispirited. Iran, I think, will be emboldened. Then the ball quite literally is in our court.

You have made your strikes. Your 72 hours are over. This horrible man is still standing. The chemical weapons are still there. What do you do now? I am afraid, I hope that is a question we never have to answer.

Mr. JOSCELYN. Just real quick, Syria and Iran have been two principal sponsors of several terrorist organizations, including Hezbollah and at times Hamas and others, going back to 1983 and the bombings in Lebanon. You can see what that access can do in terms of bombing our diplomatic facilities and that type of thing. You can never assume away the potential for them to activate terrorists against us in some way around the world.

Mr. BIDDLE. I want to emphasize what General Scales said about the difficulty of predicting what Assad will do for a variety of reasons. There has been a lot of discussion about possible retaliatory action, largely against U.S. or allied targets outside the United States, mostly on the argument that those are softer, more assailable, easier for proxies of Syria or Iran to attack. So it is certainly possible that U.S. embassies abroad could be struck. It is certainly possible that Israeli targets could be struck. It is not inconceivable that the U.S. homeland could be targeted, but I suspect that is somewhat less likely.

Now I say the following as someone who opposes U.S. military action, who is very worried about the risk of escalation, either in the form of Syrian retaliation or in the form of slippery slopes on our own side of things. But in the interest of intellectual full disclosure, it is worth observing that, in fact, Israel struck Syria in 2007 and struck targets within Syria during the course of the civil war, and Syria did not retaliate. Israelis struck the Osirak Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981, and Iraq did not retaliate.

I think it would be extremely unwise to assume that Syria would decline to retaliate. I think it is extremely unwise to assume that if we acted on the declared basis of deterring further Syrian chemical weapons use, that in order for Assad to establish his own credibility, he might use them again simply to demonstrate that he is not weak and irresolute, but it is an empirical fact that in the past, Syria has occasionally declined to respond when struck by outsiders.

Mrs. BROOKS. Just one follow-up very briefly with respect to Syria not responding, while we are so engaged and focused on Syria, does this not give Iran further time to develop its nuclear capabilities and take our attention away from Iran?

Dr. Biddle.

Mr. BIDDLE. I would hope that the administration is able to chew gum and walk at the same time and that the parts of the administration that are engaged on the Iranian issue remain engaged on the Iranian issue.

Admittedly, the time of senior leadership is always a scarce resource, and it is currently being devoted overwhelmingly to Syria. I would hope however, in the interest of good government, that this does not significantly undermine our diplomacy towards Iran.

Mrs. BROOKS. Thank you.

I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentleman from Texas, Mr. Vela, is recognized.

Mr. VELA. General Scales, what is the method by which enemies would attempt to introduce chemical weapons into this country?

General SCALES. That is an excellent question. The answer is, it is almost an endless variety of opportunities for following reason. Smuggling a nuclear weapon into this country is a very, would be horribly, a very, very complex endeavor. But remember, when we are talking about smuggling sarin, we are talking about bringing in a powder, essentially that is what sarin is, before it is mixed with alcohol, and you are, from your own State, you are familiar with your southern border. The Mexicans are, the cartels, are more than proficient in bringing in hundreds of tons of powder every year into Texas. We haven't begun to talk about shipping containers, of sarin being smuggled aboard people who get through.

So sarin is a very fungible commodity. It is extremely easy to transport. Probably most scary of all, it is very, very simple to use.

Sarin is heavier than air. If you can put it into something, for instance, like a large air conditioning duct in a subway, as the Japanese did a few years ago, or in a large apartment building or on a military installation, the effects would be catastrophic.

Now having said that, if you have the recipients, as we say in the military, warned and prepared, the effects can be minimal. We

went into Iraq in Desert Storm fully prepared for Saddam to use sarin, and he didn't for that reason. But when you talk about the innocents, when you talk about people who are caught by surprise at 2:30 in the morning, if this stuff is properly dispersed, as I said before, the effects could be absolutely catastrophic.

Mr. SHAYS. Could I just jump in for a second?

Chairman MCCAUL. Of course.

Mr. SHAYS. Twenty thousand shells in Russia, chemical weapons, no bigger than this, they were put in, they almost looked like wine bottles stacked up, building after building. You can bring this in. The bottom line is, you can't allow the terrorists to get the chemical. If they got the chemical, they can bring it in. They will use it because one of the problems is sometimes using a chemical, you may go down with it, but they don't care.

Mr. VELA. Congressman, you mentioned a while ago something to the effect that a substance could take down a whole stadium. What are we talking about in terms of what size of——

Mr. SHAYS. We are talking about one shell, excuse me, that is maybe three times the size of this bottle of water could bring down a whole stadium if it was dispersed in a way; in other words, the people, it could destroy the lives of that many people.

Mr. VELA. I guess I will pose this question to both of you: How would you assess the risks of chemical weapons being brought into this country?

Mr. SHAYS. I think it is more likely than not.

General SCALES. I agree with the Congressman.

Mr. VELA. The reason I bring that up is that, of course, I, the City of Brownsville anchors my Congressional district. At our port of entry, the Brownsville Matamoros Bridge there is an X-ray machine that was installed in 2002, and by the admission of Customs and Border Patrol, its use life has expired in 2012. I see that as a big problem, and this being of such, these issues being of such significant National interest, it boggles my mind that we are allowing that to persist.

I guess if I were going to pose a question about that, I would like to hear your thoughts in terms of what we need to do in terms of enhancing our security technology at our ports of entry.

General SCALES. First of all, I think the best way to secure nuclear weapons I guess, as the Congressman says, is at the source, to take it out of the hands of the bad guys and do it quickly.

We have a sense, Congressman, that this stuff is everywhere. But really, when you look at the facts of the case, it is really not. It is concentrated in a very few, in the bunkers of very few nations. So the target that we would address is small. But once you, once it gets out of a bunker or it gets out of a storage facility, it then just becomes a crystalline commodity that you could literally just put in your hip pocket, and to my knowledge, the X-ray machines and the sniffers that we have on the border where you are really have no ability to detect sarin.

Mr. VELA. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAUL. I thank the gentleman.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Barletta, is recognized.

Mr. BARLETTA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank you for calling this very important hearing and bring it back again to the purpose of what our committee is.

But first, I want to point out that General Scales, the former commandant of the former Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, is in my district, and the Army War College is a place where our country's greatest military leaders provide their honest feedback about situations like this in Syria.

General Scales, I want to thank you for your honesty today.

General SCALES. Congressman, I would also like to mention that Professor Biddle is also a product of the Army War College, and so as I told you before, this is a National treasure, and in these difficult times, it is something that we, as a Nation, need to preserve.

Mr. BARLETTA. Absolutely, in fact, in 2012, the War College did what they call an analytical war game where military leaders and interagency leaders come together and play out events just like this, and it is a truly a treasure for our country.

Again, the focus of this committee is National security and keeping Americans safe. As a mayor, back in 2006, I stepped on the National stage for a time when I was dealing with a problem of illegal immigration. Hazleton, my home town, was 2,000 miles away from the nearest Southern Border. I talked then about the importance of and Washington's failure of securing our borders.

Well, now, I am on a bigger stage and I have a bigger microphone. So I am going to warn everyone again about the importance of securing our borders, especially when we are dealing with this issue of illegal immigration here.

I toured the Southern Border down in San Diego, and I crawled down a hole; 80 feet into the ground was a tunnel that the drug cartel had dug 2,500 feet long from Mexico inside a warehouse in the United States.

So as we talk about how we deal with illegal immigration I think this is very clear what we need to do is secure our borders first. Keep Americans safe. That is why we have immigration laws. You said something very profound today; you were taught keep the main thing the main thing. It is not that complicated.

What I would like to ask you, General Scales, is: How real do you think the possibility, we know there is a significant presence of Hezbollah in Latin America. We know our borders are open. How real is the possibility of Iran engaging in a retaliation attack in the United States through its Hezbollah proxies in Latin America?

General SCALES. Thank you so much for asking that question because as the Chairman of the committee knows, this is something that I have been obsessed with for many years.

One of the problems with the immigration debate in Congress is that it mainly focuses on illegal immigrations and perhaps, as a secondary effect, the impact of narcotics crossing our borders. Both of those are very important, but what is missing in the debate, I believe, is that the fact that the largest Iranian embassy in the world is in Venezuela and that the fact that unregistered aliens, I believe, Mr. McCaul is the phrase we use now, are crossing the borders in tens and dozens virtually every day from many countries that are not in central and South America. So, if the border is porous—and as we spoke about earlier, a chemical like sarin is something that you could put in a hip flask and get across the border.

So the danger of border security goes beyond numbers of people and tons of narcotics. It is really fundamental to the essence of our ability to protect the Nation, particularly now that this horrible commodity, called sarin, has been loosed in the Middle East, and the bar against its use I would predict will continue to lower. Sir, you are spot-on.

I will also suggest to you that the while the point of crossing might be Texas or Arizona or New Mexico, the point of impact could very well be Pennsylvania or Montana or New York, because once you are across the border, it is nothing more than an inter-State trip of a couple of days to put this horrible stuff right in the heartland.

Mr. BARLETTA. Just one final quick question, do you trust Assad will turn over all of his chemical weapons?

General SCALES. Absolutely not.

Mr. BARLETTA. Thank you, General.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chairman now recognizes the gentleman from Nevada, Mr. Horsford.

Mr. HORSFORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thanks to you and the Ranking Member for this timely hearing.

Following the events of 9/11, I remember listening to then-President Bush try to bring all of us as citizens together as Americans, not as Republicans or Democrats, but as Americans.

Today, as President Obama gives an address to the Nation on whether to strike the Assad regime because of the use of chemical weapons, I hope that all of us as Members of Congress and citizens of the most powerful country on Earth will listen and act as Americans; not as Democrats or Republicans, but as Americans.

I have two questions. First, I want to follow up on something I think I heard earlier in the hearing on the need to support the President of the United States in order to allow him to have the leverage to bring forward a negotiated settlement in the long term and more immediately to get the offer by Syria to turn over their chemical weapons to the international community, which, after hearing all of what you have had to say, is the ultimate goal here.

So my question is: Did I hear that correctly, and what should the Congress do in order to help the President have the strongest leverage possible to achieve that goal of eliminating chemical weapons and a negotiated settlement?

Mr. SHAYS. I certainly feel that way, and let me just first say to you for the record, I believe any President has the right to use force and can't wait for Congress sometimes to spend 2 weeks or 3 weeks to decide whether they want to authorize it. Then the President needs to come back later and defend it. So I am saying to you right now, this President has the right at this very moment to strike Syria if, as commander-in-chief, he believes he should.

What I think is not helpful right now is trying to say, well, he blew it; he should have done this, or he should have done that. He is our President, and we need to help him gain some status and support in his efforts to negotiate with countries around the world.

Frankly, if I were the President, I would go to the leadership on both sides and say, I would like to send delegations of Members of Congress to go to various countries to ask for their support to get these chemicals out of Syria.

Mr. HORSFORD. Thank you.

The second question: Secretary Kerry has said recently in our briefings that chemical weapons have not been used on U.S. troops since World War I. So, as this hearing is talking about the implications for the homeland, obviously, our goal should be to ensure that our military men and women are never faced with the exposure of chemical weapons, let alone those of us broadly.

So, General, will you respond to that?

General SCALES. Sure. Choosing which weapon to use in warfare is always a trade-off between risk and reward. That is the reason we haven't seen nuclear weapons used since Hiroshima, because for either side, if you do the calculus, there is simply no reward.

To some extent, that applies to chemical weapons. Recall that, in 1991, when the United States crossed the berm into Iraq, we clearly told the Iraqi leadership not to do it because the consequences would be unacceptable. Saddam Hussein, bad as he was, made a cold, calculated decision based on two facts. Fact No. 1 is if the soldiers are trained, prepared, equipped, and warned, the effect of these weapons on soldiers is minimal, and they were. Second, the payback for using chemical weapons against the United States would have been overwhelmingly destructive.

The same with Hitler in World War II. He had invented sarin, or his people invented sarin. Hitler didn't use it against other governments. He thought about using it at Normandy in 1944, and he thought better of it. Why? Because he thought we had sarin as well, and it was a calculated decision not to use it.

So being strong in war and being unambiguous about what our reaction would be to the use of chemicals against us and to have soldiers that are trained, prepared, well-equipped, and warned is our greatest defense against these weapons.

Mr. SHAYS. I would like to quickly jump in and say, we held a number of hearings on Gulf War illnesses, and we learned that our troops were exposed to defensive use of weapons and, by this sense, not offensive. We blew up ammunition depots that included chemicals and the plumes went and impacted a whole number. It just kind of points out the problem you have with having chemicals in a country.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chairman recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Perry.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentleman, thank you for being here. I want to begin, and if you will indulge me with some statements here and then I will get to a couple of questions. I just want to correct the record from my standpoint, having served in Iraq where sarin gas and VX was found when I was there, and I know it was found before I got there. So when we are talking about weapons of mass destruction, no, there was not a nuclear warhead on the end of an intercontinental ballistic missile on the pad when I got there, but we were talking about the very same thing that we are talking about today.

When you go to the issue of trust and credibility regarding America or the President, I think it is not America's trust or credibility; I don't think that is questioned. I think it is the President's, and arguably, in my opinion, he has brought that credibility and trust upon himself.

I mean, I think the American people look further back than Iraq and Afghanistan. They can look back to the Bay of Pigs under Kennedy. They can look back to Carter and Desert I, where George Bush—and Ronald Reagan in Granada, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. I think it is appropriate when statements are made and, in some people's opinion, capriciously, we are going to attack the target, then you publish the target list, then you back up and say we are going to go the Congress, that the President has blinked already. His credibility is on the line, not America's.

But I think it appropriate if this President is going to be the commander-in-chief in a war, and he would be, as he should be, that Americans weigh in based on his credibility and his prowess to prosecute such an action. I think he has diminished that in many people's minds, which is why not only people in this building and this complex, but people around America are weighing in. It is a function of it. I am not saying it is the only part of it, but I am saying it is a function of their decision making.

In the briefing that I received that many of you did, Syria has used this in some way, the regime, 11 times before, at least it is questionable 11 times before. So why did we wait to 12? That is a factor.

This Russian deal is important, too, and it should be considered. But I would also say that, as we say in the Army, that no plan survives first contact, and there is going to be a price to pay for Russia's involvement and they would desperately like to get more involved in the Middle East, in foreign affairs and world affairs and take the upper hand, and Americans, that not a position we feel comfortable with nor should we.

So, with that, I just wanted to correct the record in that regard. Getting back to the issue at hand, my concern, as a product of the War College as well, is about a strategy. I asked Ambassador Ford in March what our strategy was once the red line was crossed, and I would argue with you that an answer of "I don't want to go there" is not an appropriate response where this is concerned. We are here at this point, and so we have to make the best of it, and we want to support the President.

But to General Scales or anybody on the panel here, wouldn't sealing, so to speak, in some terms, the Syrian border be a part of some kind of a strategy arguing what we have already talked about about those chemical weapons coming out of Syria? They are in Syria. It is regrettable. We don't like what is happening there. But isn't it arguably better for the free world to have them contained within the borders of Syria as a strategy to consider?

General SCALES. Wow, first of all, let me answer your first question. You know, Presidents always have the opportunity to say, "no," and sometimes saying no carries with it the expenditure of more gravitas and personal equity than saying, "yes." As I have said before, my great hero is Dwight D. Eisenhower, who said, "no," eight times in the middle of the Cold War and came out in 1960 as one of our most revered Presidents. So that certainly is always an option, and it doesn't necessarily reduce your credibility.

To answer your question, I never thought of that. But I will say this: The Syrian border is far more porous than our own. You may recall during the Iraq war that the rat line, which ran from Da-

mascus to Baghdad, ran down the Tigress and Euphrates Rivers, and it was an open highway.

Perhaps, we could, but we would have to get the cooperation of countries like Iran and Iraq to stop this. Perhaps we could do it, but, boy, that would be an incredibly difficult task.

But I take your point. I hadn't really considered that, and I think it is excellent.

Mr. SHAYS. Could I just make a quick comment? It is unfortunate we don't have a status of force agreement with Iraq. But in my dealings with Turkey, they are so suspicious of everything, our airfield in Incirlik, they will hold us up, Members of Congress want to get out, they will hold us up 2 hours just to let us know they are the boss. I think it would be very difficult to get their cooperation. But, you know, it is worth trying.

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Chairman, just one last question. Should we be more concerned as Americans talking about the border as Mr. Barletta did with a state-sponsored response in the way of potentially sarin gas coming out or VX or anything and being transported into our country, or individual organization responses, al-Nusra, al-Qaeda, associated affiliates? What is more likely?

General SCALES. I think terrorist groups far more likely.

Mr. SHAYS. Absolutely.

Mr. PERRY. I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chairman recognizes the gentlelady from New York, Ms. Clarke.

Mr. SHAYS. We are impressed with her willingness to stay. Thank you.

Ms. CLARKE. Well, let me thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, and thank all of you.

I have been trying to soak in as much information as I possibly can in the hopes of being able to decide the best, to the best of my ability.

It is good to see you Congressman, welcome back.

I want to focus on the domestic end, and I think it is important that we put what we have been talking about in context. I am concerned about vulnerabilities and the war footing of our Nation, and we haven't discussed that as a Nation in a very, very long time.

Most Americans seem to have a remote view to military and war, and in this case, I am concerned about how strong we are as a Nation, how resilient we are as a Nation in our ability to sort of stand up the type of operations that protect us from any type of retaliation.

I mean, people are thinking about, you know, would Syria have the ability? I am concerned about lone wolves that are stimulated by the fact that we are now engaged in some sort of military activity. I am concerned about a lone wolf, along with a cyber attack. I am concerned about those types of things. I am concerned that we are in an era of sequestration right now.

I am concerned about a weakened economy that is trying to bounce back and that seems to move in different directions, depending on which way the wind is blowing, right? So we do a military strike; the next thing you know the Dow is dropping. I am just wondering how much we are looking internally at our ability and our strength to withstand another military action of some sort.

So I want to ask, what confidence do you have that we as a Nation have the wherewithal to stand up a robust defense from America as Americans to back up what we are putting out there. This is not time for wolf tickets, right? We want to really show we have what it takes. That means all of us have to show that we have what it takes. Right now, we are in sequestration. So I would like to hear from you gentleman what you think about that.

General SCALES. First of all, that is a superb question to ask as this hearing ends. One of the things that absolutely amazes me as a soldier and, of course, now as a citizen, is the amazing wisdom of the American people.

You represent your constituents and you carry their voice into this House, and that is very admirable. But the thing I find so amazing is to listen to the newscasts and talk to Congressmen who interact with their constituents and sense the collective wisdom of the people. It is hard to sell an American a wolf ticket, to use your phrase, because they have to live from day to day, pay the bills, put the kids in school, earn a living, and all of that takes obviously primacy.

But when something like this happens, as you suggest, the American people are very wise in weighing the options and coming up with an opinion. I believe that if the threat is real and systemic, if the American people feel in their soul that they are threatened by some exterior threat, then all the 24-hour news organizations, no matter how hard they try, will not change the collective opinion of the American people to act. I hope the people outside this country who are listening perhaps to this hearing will understand that. You can only push the American people so far. When they sense that they are threatened, I believe that they are ultimately going to do the right thing.

Ms. CLARKE. So my question is, again, I don't know how much 100 ballistic missiles cost. What I do know is we have been cutting our budget tremendously as a Nation, and we put two wars on the credit card, which we are still trying to pay off. Where are we when we talk about a military strike? Again, I mean, listen, the atrocities are real. No one can look at what we have been given in terms of intelligence and say that this is not the most horrific incident that we have seen in the Middle East with a nation against its own people. However, there is a cost that we are talking about incurring. I want to get a sense of, are we going to have to cut budgets? Does this go back on the credit card? How do we reconcile it?

I understand when American people feel threatened, we will go in the hole, but I don't want to come back later and have my colleagues saying, now everyone starves until we pay this off.

General SCALES. Well, the cost, to answer your question, will ultimately be north of a half a billion dollars. Each of these missiles is $1.5 million apiece presuming that we want to replace them in order to maintain our stockage. We have already fired 250 against Libya, so I think there are some ships out there with empty magazines.

I absolutely agree with you. There is an old equation that power equals capability times will. If you reduce the will, the equation is that you that you reduce power. But if you reduce capability, you reduce it as well. It is multiplicating factor, rather than an additive

one. So if you reduce them both, then sometime in the future, to your point exactly, the total power that we can project as a Nation is going to be diminished in proportion, and it bothers me.

Ms. CLARKE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAUL. Let me thank the witnesses for your extraordinary testimony on the eve of a 9/11 and on the eve of a very important vote before the Congress. The news reports I have received just in the short time of this hearing indicate that that vote may be shifting toward a vote on a U.N. resolution. In a situation where I have said there is no good outcome, that may be the best that we can possibly hope for.

With that, thank you for being here. The record will stay open for 10 days. This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:25 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

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