



‘We Should Be Willing To Talk To Syria and Iran’

U.S. Marine Corps Gen. Joseph P. Hoar (ret.), a four-star general, was Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Central Command (1991-94), commanding the U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf after the 1991 war. He also served in the Vietnam War, as a battalion and brigade advisor with the Vietnamese Marines. General Hoar spoke with EIR on April 17, 2007.

EIR: Please give your assessment of the danger of a war between the United States and Iran.

Hoar: I think a couple of things. All of the business with Patriot batteries already in place out there, the two carrier battle groups being in the Gulf, which is a huge step up when you’re not in combat operations, just because of the very nature of the crowding and so forth—the numbers of ships that are going back and forth—commercial ships alone.

There’s another issue with this, which is that another carrier has left from the West Coast. Within a few weeks, it’ll be out in the Gulf to replace one of the two that is there. The question is, do you keep another carrier on station? Is this carrier going to become part of the surge? And if you do, that further complicates the numbers of ships floating around, because there’ll be a carrier and four or five other ships in the battle group.

But then comes the other question. In the ’90-’91 war, President Bush, the senior, is reputed to have said, in response to the Joint Chiefs, who were saying in October, “Well, we need to have a rotation policy. We propose not to leave a quarter of a million guys who are out there, indefinitely, and so we want to think about a six-month rotation policy,” “You mean you’ve got another quarter of a million people out there, that could go?” And I guess Colin Powell said “yes,” and the President’s response was, “Send them.”

What that did, was to put in motion the activities that brought the numbers up to over a half a million, the last of which were arriving just days before the air war began. And so, these kinds of decisions about moving large forces, have another impact: creating momentum. There was no way that, when the President said, “Send them,” and the total number was going to be over a half-a-million—you couldn’t do anything, but either have Saddam Hussein withdraw from Kuwait, or go to war. Those were the only two choices.

And it seems to me, that if you have a third carrier battle

group going into the Gulf, if you’re the Vice President, if you’re the President, the turnover gives you a 50% increase in capability. So, what’s going to happen? Are we going to keep two carriers there forever, and swap out one? Are we going to wait until we get a fourth carrier out there, and swap out two? In the meantime, are we going to leave the Western Pacific uncovered without a carrier battle group? If there’s no progress, how do you stop sending the core message?

You know, we send two carrier groups to “send a message.” I’ve always thought the U.S. Postal Service was the way to send messages, but the government, both sides of the aisle, likes to send messages with carrier battle groups. The question is: Assuming no movement on the part of Iran, with respect to the nuclear program, and related stuff—which I suspect is about 90% what’s going to happen—what does the U.S. government do? Do they say, “Well, it’s not as important now as it was two months ago, or three months, and reduce the numbers of ships that are out there?”

These are decisions that oftentimes aren’t thought through very carefully. And I think that, as we get a little bit further down the road, there will be an issue of momentum, and consistency: How do we go forward? If we have to put a carrier back in the Pacific, do we just go back? “We sent the message, the message has been received, and nothing’s happened.” And then we’re back to business as usual?

I think it’s an interesting possibility, that just the very nature of this thing causes the government to try and figure out a good answer, after nothing happens. The message is received, but nothing changes. And what are next steps then?

EIR: What about diplomacy as a means of settling the so-called Iran crisis without resorting to military force?

Hoar: I think the handling of the British sailors and marines is very illustrative of this issue. I don’t know the whole story, but I just read here, within the last day or so, that the Russians played a role. It seems to me, that what the Iranians were saying, was “You can’t pressure us.” If the Prime Minister stands up on Downing Street and says ominously, something’s going to happen, and then people start talking back channel, all of a sudden, things start to happen.

I have thought, right from the start, that the United States, and only the United States can solve the problem, because

we're really the only ones that have all the cards. Spending four or five years with the Brits, the French, and the Germans acting on our behalf, makes no sense. Because the issue has to do with recognition. It has to do with the history going back to the early '50s. It has to do with embargoed money. If we were willing to have a blank sheet of paper discussion with the Iranians, perhaps with nobody else present, I think all kinds of things are possible.

With the movie *300*, that has just come out, and all the talk about the importance of the Battle of Thermopylae, and the great heroism and so forth, we're reminded that it was really the naval battle of Salamis that turned back the Persians, and if they had not been turned back in the Fifth Century B.C., I think that at least Eastern Europe would be speaking Farsi today.

Somebody needs, once in a while, to acknowledge the history of that country, and that they were a world power at one time, and it's important to them. In my relationship with the Egyptians, I see in their art work, and in their discussions, that they like to point out that the rest of us were living in caves when they had a very highly developed society. And so, I think that if we're not willing to give them some acknowledgement of their past, to acknowledge that Iran got caught up in the great game between us and the Soviet Union in the 1950s, that perhaps supporting the Shah wasn't the smartest thing to do, after that, I think a lot of things are possible.

The extraordinary thing is, we have so many good people that could carry this off. We have a country with extraordinarily good diplomats, and political people, that have had good experience. Governor [Bill] Richardson in New Mexico is one of many. On the other side of the aisle, there's Jim Baker. There's George Mitchell. How many of those guys would be willing to grab hold of this current problem, is another question, but the point is, we have loads of people that have done this kind of work, and done it very successfully.

EIR: Do you see any chance the Administration might take that advice?

Hoar: I don't think the Vice President would be open. I'm reading just from open press. I'm a little bit closer to the issue with Syria. I think it's extraordinary, that now we're hearing that the Israelis are talking with the Syrians, but that they don't want us to know, because we don't want them to talk to the Syrians. . . .

If ever there was a wake-up call for the Israelis, it was what happened this past Summer. It just doesn't do any good to maintain this idea that we're going to be tough, that we're going to teach them a lesson, and we're going to punish them. We could all learn from the fact that that has not worked, and it might be time to try something new.

EIR: How do you respond to Mr. [Lyndon] LaRouche's idea that the United States should ally with the three other great powers of the world today, Russia, China, and India, to solve

these pressing crises?

Hoar: Well, I think almost anything is possible if you have strong leadership that's willing to sit down, and talk, and hammer out a plan for the future.

One caution that I would give you, is that if you're serious about this war of ideas, which some call the "war on terror," we're not helping our efforts at all by opening up our relationships with India. If [Pakistani President Pervez] Musharraf is important to our efforts in South Asia, as I believe he is, and if Pakistan, regardless of what you think about past efforts, is important to us, we need to rethink, at least for the short term, our relationship with India.

India is in Afghanistan, and is driving the Pakistanis crazy. And when we decide that we're going to have this new relationship, through a nuclear program, with India, we just pulled the rug out from under Musharraf. The business community is just salivating at the possibility that we could find economic activity with India. And I'm sure we can.

But the point is, what's important right now? If something happens to Musharraf, if that government falls—it's flawed, as it is—our ability to make things happen in tribal areas and so forth, next to Afghanistan, and our long-term success in Afghanistan, are going to be significantly impaired. Is Musharraf playing both sides against the middle? Of course he is. But Pakistan institutionally has been burned so many times after they have reached out to us, to be our friend, going back to the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, all the way up to ejecting the Soviet Union from Afghanistan and so forth, that they don't trust us. And they have every reason not to trust us. The relationship with Pakistan in the past has been: What can you do for me today? And after whatever it is I'm looking for today, we start all over again with a clean sheet.

I am 100% in favor of the great powers trying to come to some agreements on these issues. I think China's penetration into Sub-Saharan Africa is, in the long term, very damaging to us. This is not new. In the '60s, the Chinese were there in force. The difference was, because the Chinese had no money, they were still dependent on the Soviet Union for logistics support, and so forth. While in many ways they were not liked by the Africans, because of their ethno-centrism, the no-strings-attached money, the economic aid, sweetheart deals—all of those things are very popular with the leadership in some of the Sub-Saharan African countries.

I think that China and Russia now are very wealthy, for all the reasons we both know. Look at the difference in what's happened with Russia since the price of oil has boomed. They were falling apart there, in the late '90s, when oil was down to \$8 to \$10 a barrel. China holds all our money, so they can do virtually anything they want.

I think that, the new [U.S.] President ought to think through an effort to draw in the major powers, and see what could be done, economically; and then the obvious corollary of that, would be to use the combined might of these countries, which is extraordinarily powerful, to see if some political

breakthrough couldn't be possible, as well.

EIR: How do you react to the efforts by the Congressional Democratic leadership to force a date-certain withdrawal of most American forces from Iraq?

Hoar: There's nobody that I have talked to on the military side, in off-the-record meetings, who has said anything other than, there is no military solution to the Iraqi problem. Service chiefs are saying the same thing. What happens in public is, that the senior leadership in this country, seems to be either tone-deaf on this issue, or it is too complicated for them to get their arms around.

I read just this week, that the Iraqi government had once again prohibited former Ba'athists to enter into the government. These are the kinds of things that should be raising red flags all the way around. If you want to start to reduce the power of the Sunni insurgents in Iraq, one of the things that ought to happen, is that you acknowledge that former capable people, who were in the former government, have an opportunity to participate in the political process going forward. All this prohibition does is convince the Sunnis that they're going to be excluded from any meaningful positions within the government, in the army, the police, wherever. These are the kinds of decisions that prolong this insurgency.

The more troops you put out there, the more people get killed.

EIR: Please comment further on the timetable issue.

Hoar: I spent a fair amount of time thinking and working and being involved in counterinsurgency efforts over the years. Obviously I took part in a pretty major counterinsurgency effort in the '60s and '70s. In addition to that, I've taught this at the Command Staff College, I had responsibilities for this in Washington, and having spent most of my military time in the Third World, I have some sensitivity to these issues.

The first thing is, that the insurgents are always on the strategic defensive. In other words, time is on their side. If you don't become decisively engaged over time, the government you're trying to overthrow is going to find that they can't continue with the effort at the level that they have been devoting to the insurgency, and change comes to pass. And all of the great rebel leaders, from George Washington to Ho Chi Minh, knew this. That you win by not losing. You know, George Washington had a stunning victory at Saratoga, because the British screwed it up, but it was sufficient to cause the French to say, the outcome of this war in North America is not preordained; we should help the rebels. And so, with the exception of Saratoga, Washington never won a significant battle, until, of course, the Brits collapsed at Yorktown.

And my friends who served in Vietnam would tell you, we could have won; every time we engaged, we won the battle. Perhaps the best example in recent times is the Algerian go-around. It took a general who happened to be a President, to realize that even if you killed a million Algerians, even if

you had 50,000 Algerians under your pay acting as intelligence operatives, even if you knew what was going on, even if you could go to the heart of the terrorist movement, at the end of the day, it wasn't going to make any difference. Because if you don't treat root causes, you don't change the equation. You don't bring a good ending to the fight.

And we are certainly not going for root causes. We are not truly committed to making the political changes that might have an effect on the security system, that would allow the reduction of troops. And as a result, I hope I'm wrong, but I think the big surge is doomed to fail, because there isn't the effort to make the changes, both politically and economically, that are required to change the mindset of the insurgents—on both sides.

EIR: You have undoubtedly followed the recent efforts of some at the White House to find a retired three or four star general who might be willing to serve as the so-called "War Czar." What is your evaluation of this effort?

Hoar: Well, I think it's more specific than that. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs is the advisor to the Secretary of Defense—he's not in the chain of command, and he is also the advisor to the President. That's in the law. He is the only one that has direct access to the President. He can go see the President any time he wants, and obviously he'd need to tell the Secretary of Defense that was his plan, and not have the Secretary of Defense blind-sided. But I think two things.

First of all, I think [Marine Corps Gen.] Jack Sheehan's op-ed piece [*Washington Post* April 14] was great. As you know, he was initially on whatever that thing was that Richard Perle had adopted, at the beginning of the Bush Administration [Defense Policy Board—ed.] He left it pretty early on. And I think it was because of his dismay at what was being discussed. You'd have to ask him, but I'm sure of that.

However, the point is that, the "Czar" has been this woman Megan O'Sullivan. I can understand how you would want to have somebody with military experience giving Steve Hadley a hand over there. I don't see anything wrong with that. But you get the feeling that it's really not that; that you're going to have a Four-Star on the NSC [National Security Council] staff; who's he going to talk to? Well, we know from the way NSC works under the current crowd: anybody he wants to.

Is he going to then talk to service chiefs, combatant commanders? My guess is he would. And I think if I were the Chairman, I'd have some questions about that. But I'd be very surprised if you could find a senior military officer today that would be willing to pick up those kinds of responsibilities.

If someone were being interviewed for a job, I'd suggest to him to find out the conceptual framework of his boss. Because one of the great problems that we have today, is, you've got military officers who disagree with the political leaders; their job is not to make policy, it's to execute policy, to use Newt Gingrich's term. And if you disagree with the way our



www.25idl.army.mil/Sharee Moore

"I don't think the civilian leadership has any concept of the sacrifices that these families make," said General Hoar. Families never know if, or when, their loved ones are coming home, and that, among other aspects of the current war deployment, is tearing the military, and the society, apart. Here, a soldier returns after a tour in Iraq.

political leaders are running the country, you have two choices: suck it up and do what you're told to do, or speak out and get yourself in trouble with your boss and everybody else. Or pack it in, and go home. If you were being considered for high office, it probably wouldn't hurt to try to find out what your boss is going to do, before you take the job on.

EIR: Recently, Gen. Barry McCaffrey (USA-ret.) submitted a memo to West Point, reporting on his recent visit to Iraq. He warned that the U.S. military, particularly the Army and the Marine Corps, are near a break point. Do you agree? Can you elaborate?

Hoar: There are a couple of issues here. First of all, the Army and the Marine Corps are running a much different rotation arrangement, but at the end of the day, it works out about the same. As you know, the Marines are going out for 7 months at a time, which means that they go for a shorter period, but they go back more frequently. The Army term has been a year; now it looks like it's going to be 15 months.

There are two issues. One is the readiness issue. If you speed up the time when the troops are back in the States—let's say, a year in Iraq, and then home for a year—well, what home means is that you go back and you probably get an opportunity to take three weeks off. Just stand down, particularly if you're a youngster; go back to your home town, visit your parents, hang out and so forth. Then all of a sudden, you are right back into this extraordinary build-up again, because something like 20 to 40% of the people in your organization, have transferred out. They're either finished their enlistment, or it's their turn to go to school, or maybe they've been in that

battalion for three years, and it's time for them to do something else. They've been promoted out of the jobs that they have. So there's a huge turnover.

So, the training cycle begins anew, right down to squad level, where individual soldiers start a very aggressive program to go through individual skills, working together, squad tactics, defense, offense, scouting, and patrolling, defense against IEDs, on and on and on. Then it works up to platoon level, and to company level, and now you're into a couple of months of training. Battalion level, brigade level, exercises, going out to the national training center, go to 29 Palms, go to the big base down in Louisiana—all of these kinds of things—and as you get closer and closer to deployment, the training tempo increases.

What the senior people in the Army and the Marine Corps are saying is, there's no longer any time to practice for the possibility that you might have

to serve in Korea, or to go someplace else, and fight a conventional war, because once you get your battalion and brigade organized, you're not talking about the ability to fight as a large military organization, in a combined arms war, with artillery and air, and all of the other things, maneuvering against North Vietnamese conventional forces. You're now in simulations in which Arabic-speaking people are acting in a simulated village about how you learn how to search people, how to run checkpoints, how to conduct sweeps, blah, blah.

This is the long way around to saying, the time at home is in many ways, as you get closer to deployment, more and more difficult; because if you're a young officer, or a young NCO, you're probably working 60-70 hours a week, and there's very little time for family, for other things.

The time at home is very tough. Time with families is diminished. If you're a bachelor, and you go to war for a year, and then you could go home and train for a year before going back to war again, think what kind of a love life you might have, in the midst of all of that. Who in their right mind is going to think about going out on Saturday night with a guy like that?

And so, it's tough on them personally, and what Barry McCaffrey, I think, is concerned about, is that they're not training to do all the things that infantry, and armor units, are supposed to do.

Artillery units, for example, practice little at firing their artillery pieces, because so little of that is used in the counter-insurgency program; so most of these artillery units are doing security-type duties. The artillery units have all kinds of mode of transport trucks; they're doing convoys; they're doing a

whole bunch of things, other than what they're supposed to be doing.

Similarly, while the tank, the armored forces, are very much engaged, they're not engaged in the things that armored forces were designed to do, which is to provide shock, mobility, and firepower, and be able to maneuver against a conventional army force, which they don't do when they're getting ready to do a counterinsurgency operation.

So, that's one aspect of it.

The other aspect of it is, that these units, which, in training—let's say that the average tank in the U.S. Army or the Marine Corps, in training is held to about 800 miles a year worth of training. You're going to take a tank out of the tank park and take it out to a training area. You put it on a heavy hauler, as you would see with a great huge bulldozer, drag it out to where it's going to train. Then it trains, and they put it back on one of these things that's called a HET (heavy equipment trailer), and they take it back to base. And so, instead of 800 miles a year, these tanks are doing several thousand miles a year, and the cost in terms of maintenance, and in the reduced lifespan of these vehicles, is staggering. There is a bill to pay, someplace down the road.

Barry McCaffrey is talking to an audience that understands these issues, so he hasn't enumerated them. The Army uses the term "reset the force." Reset the force means, take all this stuff that's just getting beaten up, after staying out there for years, and bring it home and rebuild it. And the costs associated with that: The last chief of staff of the Army refused, as you recall, to submit a budget, because he said, within the constraints that I have, I can't possibly do what I need to do, to make sure that the United States Army is ready to meet its responsibilities.

That's one piece.

The other piece is the impact on individual soldiers and Marines. During the Vietnam War, soldiers and Marines, people who were participating in ground combat, went out for 12 or 13 months—it started at 13 and then everybody uniformly was out there for 12 months. There was no unit rotation. People were just fed into the units on a regular basis, throughout the year.

While, from an operational point of view, that was not nearly as good as the unit rotations that we're in right now, it guaranteed that people only did 12 months. At the end of 12 months, to the day, you were out of there, and flying home.

The Navy, on the other hand, always rotates as a unit. If a ship goes out for a full deployment, everybody that's on that ship has enough time to remain on that ship until it comes home. [They] started out with normal six-month deployments, and in fact, sometimes did seven, sometimes did eight, sometimes did 11 months. What this did, over a period of years, is, it just destroyed the career force in the Navy. People were just fed up. They had no life of their own. You know, you missed the birth of your children. You missed your planned marriage date. You missed your parents' 25th wedding anni-

versary. All of the kinds of things that are important to individuals, were completely screwed up.

So, after the Vietnam war, the Navy instituted a policy called, "6 Months Portal to Portal." In other words, if a ship left San Diego to go to the Western Pacific, on that date, six months hence, it was going to be back in San Diego. You could plan to get married, a week after your return date. You would be able to say to your parents, if you're going to have your 25th wedding anniversary, maybe you could slip it a few days. I'll be here for sure.

All of this has gone down the drain. And, you know, it isn't just the youngsters, the young men and women that are out there fighting the war. It's the impact that it has on families. Pretty soon, people say, I can't keep doing this. I can't keep telling my wife that such-and-such is so, and then that keeps changing. I can't tell my kids that I'm going to see them in April, and April turns into July or August, and I'm not going to be home for their Summer vacation.

I've not seen anything on the Marine Corps, so I can't say for sure, but with respect to the Army—you see this discussion about people being promoted quickly. That the last promotion board, from captain to major, had something like an 85% promotion opportunity, when in normal times it's 70%. What this reflects is, that majors are leaving the Army, that you need more majors, and the way to get them, is to lower the standard, and promote more guys, and that by itself is pretty destructive. Of course, we've all read about the lowering of standards for people coming into service: lower education, more flexibility with respect to substance abuse, more flexibility with respect to criminal activity—criminal may be too strong a word, but basically getting in trouble with the law.

All of these things are what Barry McCaffrey is alluding to when he says, we can't keep doing what we're doing.

Beyond that, I don't think the civilian leadership has any concept of the sacrifices that these families make. We all have some sense of loss when somebody is killed or maimed. Just the day-to-day business, all that hangs over communities, the fear that their husbands or wives are going to be killed, or wounded. The problems of trying to raise kids as a single parent. You all know that's hard enough—that happens often enough in the society at large—but hanging over it, is this issue of life and death, every single day, and you know it's going to continue. You're going to go back, back, and back, and how a woman, or a man—but I think particularly for women, with kids, and so forth—how they deal with this, and do repetitively, knowing what the potential costs are every time their spouse goes out the door, to start another deployment, is just beyond me—I really mean that.

The other thing is, I think that the fact that we have, in my judgment, a very small chance of success—but I think by putting time limits on it, we almost ensure that the bad guys are just going to outlast us. And so, I'm not comfortable with doing this. My own view is that we needed the troops that are

embedded in our Iraqi forces; you need to get U.S. forces off the street. It's beyond belief for me to think that a couple, or four or five, young Americans are manning a checkpoint, and they don't speak the language, and they're not familiar with the culture.

I think that the American contribution would be to act as a quick reaction force, to help Iraqi units if they get in over their heads, but to keep Americans embedded in there, to give this thing an opportunity to succeed.

But if you had gone down that road, you wouldn't have needed a surge. On the contrary, you could have reduced the numbers of units that you had in Iraq, and to me that would have made a lot more sense. If you had a really political timetable of things that needed to be accomplished, and you could hold the Maliki government to it—that's where you needed a timetable, not on withdrawing the troops—then I think there would be some slight chance of success. But just thinking that more troops on the street, more Americans being in danger, for any length of time, without doing the developmental and political things, and holding that to a timetable, I don't think is workable.

EIR: Gen. [Anthony] Zinni appeared on "Meet the Press" last Sunday [April 15] and made some very similar comments.

Hoar: When you read Barry McCaffrey's note, you noted the numbers of troops that are in Kuwait. We've built an enormous base in Kuwait, that is capable of housing 10,000 Americans. Three-story barracks, mess halls, movie theaters, concessions—if your home base is Fort Bragg, North Carolina, you can order your brand new car while you're still in Kuwait, for delivery at Fort Bragg when you get back. We have the facilities right now to keep large numbers of Americans in the region, which would contribute to stability overall. They don't have to be on the streets in Baghdad—that's my concern, because I don't think we're accomplishing what we need to accomplish.

EIR: What about the efforts by some of the key regional actors in the Persian Gulf and Middle East, like Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah, who has launched a number of peace initiatives?

Hoar: I would tell you that I know King Abdullah pretty well. When he was the Crown Prince, he was the senior official in Saudi Arabia that I met with routinely. He's an extraordinary person. As you know, he does not have the same affiliation with the Wahabis as his half-brothers. His mother was a Bedouin. His political base is with the Bedouin tribes, not with the Wahabis. If he lives long enough, he will make an extraordinary difference in Saudi Arabia.

I think the Arab League proposal, put together in 2002 in Beirut, flew by without anybody in this country paying any attention to it. [Former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu's response the next day after it was publicized, was to destroy Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah.

The point is, that most of us felt that, with respect to return of all Palestinians and '67 borders, that the proclamation was sufficiently general that there was room for discussion on both those issues. You'll recall that when Mr. [Yizhak] Rabin [Israeli Prime Minister, assassinated in 1995—ed.] was alive, there was the right of return on the table, which was going to be only emblematic of the fact that people had been forced out. And some number, not greater than 10,000, was what was being discussed, as I recall.

I think that King Abdullah has stepped up, which has been very uncharacteristic, for the Saudis. Abdullah, in every sense, has taken the lead on just the things that you've said. He is brokering a deal to give Hezbollah a couple more seats in the Parliament in Lebanon. You'll recall that when the West walked away from Lebanon in the '80s, it was the Saudis that brokered the deal that held pretty much in place, with the exception of [Rafik] Hariri's assassination, and those that followed thereafter, until the dust-up between Hezbollah and the Israelis last Summer.

I was out there in February and early March; I travelled to Egypt, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. The message was identical from every senior leadership: If the United States wants to make progress in the Middle East, the first thing is to start moving seriously on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. The second issue is, talk to the Syrians, and the Iranians. The third issue is, give your first effort to the Syrians, because it's low-hanging fruit. You can separate them from the Iranians, and perhaps shut down Hezbollah, if you work with the Syrians.

You know, I've never seen anything like it. It was as if the Arabs agreed, the next time you see an American, these are the points you're going to make. That's not characteristic of Arabs.

There's a lot going on out there. And of course, we're all watching this Syrian thing, because of [House Speaker] Nancy Pelosi, and [Rep.] Daryl Issa, and assorted other people that are out there. Not to mention the Baker-Hamilton report, which suggested all of this made sense.

It's just so discouraging that we don't talk to Syria. That's in everybody's best interest, and to the credit of the Saudis, they realized that you could break the Syrians away from supporting Hezbollah.

EIR: There are other efforts under way to open the dialogue with Syria, including a recent visit by an American academic who is active in the Jewish peace movement, who met for several hours with President Assad.

Hoar: Right after 9/11, we had an informal deal with the Syrians, so we could take guys like that Canadian citizen and send him over there to get his fingernails torn out, on our behalf. But that relationship ended, when the Syrians said, we'd like to start the peace process again with a blank sheet of paper. And we told them, "no." That's what ended it. We turned the Syrians down, early on, when they wanted to start this discussion. What's wrong with that picture?