

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 17, 2012

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Leon E. Panetta
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Clinton and Secretary Panetta:

We write with growing concern over the increasingly unpredictable and violent situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and the ramifications for nonproliferation efforts in the region. We commend the Administration for increasing the international isolation of the Syrian regime, including the imposition of sanctions by Europe on Syrian oil and the unprecedented actions taken by the Arab League.

We want to ensure that planning is fully underway to address potential proliferation as internal security in Syria becomes more frayed and the prospect of a post-Assad regime in Syria becomes increasingly likely. Very disturbing are the reports from Assistant Secretary of State (International Security and Nonproliferation) Thomas Countryman that Iran and Russia are supplying arms to Syria, and Syria has supplied weapons to Hezbollah, a group designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the Department of State.

While we appreciate that you are closely monitoring the situation, the growing breakdown of order and security in Syria could place its significant stockpiles of poison gases and operational chemical weapons at risk. As Assistant Secretary Countryman has noted, Syria is one of the few countries that is not a signatory to the Chemical Weapons Convention, making the accountability of these dangerous arms all the more difficult. In the event of a regime collapse, it is difficult to overstate the danger these weapons could pose to allies and U.S. forces in the region if they fall into the wrong hands.

Another significant proliferation risk in Syria is the arsenal of shoulder-mounted man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS) and other missile systems in the Syrian arsenal. We are aware that Hezbollah had in the past obtained certain missile technology from Syria. The recent events in Libya demonstrate that non-state terrorist groups will seek to secure these weapons in the midst of chaos and an apparent lack of security or custody of these weapons.

Finally, Syria has not cooperated with the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA's) efforts to inspect the suspected nuclear activities at the Dair Alzour site for several years. We are concerned that Syria's unwillingness to allow IAEA inspections represents a risk that any remaining nuclear materials in the country may be subject to proliferation.

We know you share our concerns, and stand ready to work with you to support your efforts to address the proliferation of these weapons. We ask for your assurance that efforts to monitor or

secure these sites and weapons are a significant and critical part of all of our work with respect to Syria. Please keep us fully informed of all U.S., allied, and international efforts.

Sincerely,

Kirsten E. Gillibrand

Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator

Susan Collins

Susan Collins
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator