

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, September 29, 2011 9:06 AM
To: H
Subject: FW: talked with Ambassador Ford

From: Ford, Robert S
Sent: Thursday, September 29, 2011 8:46 AM
To: Feltman, Jeffrey D; Sullivan, Jacob J; Nuland, Victoria J; Burns, William J; Walles, Jacob; Dibble, Elizabeth L; Abedin, Huma; Mills, Cheryl D; Zeya, Uzra S; Mull, Stephen D; Hof, Frederic C; Walles, Jacob; Carle, Lisa M; Kennedy, Patrick F; Boswell, Eric J; Hof, Frederic C; Sherman, Wendy R
Cc: Hammer, Michael A; Snipe, Aaron D; Holtz, Greta C (NEA); Vasquez, Edgar J; Djerassi, Alexander M; Schedlbauer, Amy W; Connelly, Maura; Conlon, Steven M; Lohman, Lee; Irwin, Matthew T; Hanson, Kathleen D
Subject: RE: talked with Ambassador Ford

I'll send to a select few some pictures of our 2 damaged vehicles.

I would just emphasize that the 2 RSOs dispatched from the embassy to extract me were at real risk of serious bodily harm, as the pictures will demonstrate.

We have a superb American and Syrian staff here – responded very, very well.

Regards to all,

robert

Ambassador

U.S. Embassy

Damascus, Syria

tel: 963 11 3391 - 4872

email: fordr@state.gov

This email is UNCLASSIFIED

From: Feltman, Jeffrey D
Sent: Thursday, September 29, 2011 2:34 PM
To: Sullivan, Jacob J; Nuland, Victoria J; Burns, William J; Walles, Jacob; Dibble, Elizabeth L; Abedin, Huma; Mills, Cheryl D; Zeya, Uzra S; Mull, Stephen D; Hof, Frederic C; Walles, Jacob; Carle, Lisa M; Kennedy, Patrick F; Boswell, Eric J; Hof, Frederic C; Sherman, Wendy R
Cc: Hammer, Michael A; Snipe, Aaron D; Holtz, Greta C (NEA); Vasquez, Edgar J; Djerassi, Alexander M; Schedlbauer, Amy W; Ford, Robert S; Connelly, Maura; Conlon, Steven M; Lohman, Lee; Irwin, Matthew T; Hanson, Kathleen D
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FYI: Robert Ford called in from Embassy Damascus. He and his team are, as reported, back at the Chancery. Robert was full of praise for the DS support he got, including his TDY support from Beirut. Amy Tachco (who was with him) is already feeding us with information

and has promised media guidance. Robert speculated that messages of intimidation were directed to two audiences, the Embassy and the opposition figures they were meeting at the time.

Robert was, as always, incredibly calm and focused, despite what sounds to me to be quite a harrowing experience where the thugs succeeded in damaging two cars (parked a block away for more discretion) beyond repair and were pounding on the doors of the room to which Robert et al. had retreated (while, as Robert noted, their hosts continued, in true NEA fashion, to serve coffee and tea). Robert commented laconically that, had he tried to leave, "I do not think they would have killed me," confining themselves in his guess to punches to the head.

Robert characterized the mob as "not spontaneous." "They knew we were coming." He noted that the Spanish Ambassador had visited the group a day earlier, without problem. We discussed the problems of rent-a-mobs - easy to call them up, but not so easy to control them. Thus, even though in the end the Syrian security services did the right thing in extracting the Ambassador and team and escorting them all the way to the Embassy, Robert believes it would be useful for me to demarche the Syrian Ambassador (who will undoubtedly protest but still report back), especially as we've seen a pattern -- the attacks on the French and U.S. embassies, the stone and egg-throwing against the French Ambassador, and today's siege on our Ambassador. Robert noted that one side of the SARG calls up rent-a-mobs, while another side eventually does the right thing in providing security support (as in the Embassy attack).

Robert noted that the group they met, of Nasserites and leftists, had a legally permitted, open meeting on Sunday that was covered in the press (including two days of front-page coverage in Al-Watan). "This was not a forbidden group," he said, noting that their publicly reported platform called for "no to violence, no to sectarianism, and no to foreign military action." This was not some forbidden organization.

Thus, Robert suggests that, for our media guidance, we emphasize that the Ambassador and team were just doing the normal work of any Embassy. Intimidation by pro-government mobs is "not civilized behavior" is the tone Robert suggests we strike.

Action: NEA/ELA - please work with Embassy Damascus on a demarche that we can deliver today to Imad Moustapha. I'll ask Sandy to set up a time. Please note the pattern here.

Action: NEA Press - please work with Embassy Damascus and appropriate offices here on the media guidance/statements.

Jeffrey Feltman

*Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
Department of State*

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