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**The Secretary's Call Sheet for
Representative Gary Ackerman (D-NY)**

Purpose of Call: Rep. Ackerman is planning to issue a statement on Syria and would like to discuss recent events there with you.

- **Syrian Crackdown:** The Syrian government continues to exact brutal reprisals against its own citizens resulting in the deaths of hundreds since March. We reject the Syrian government's justification of its tactics as necessary to maintain "stability." The Asad regime remains the source of instability as it foments violence by meeting peaceful protests with deadly force and mass arrests.
- **Political Future:** The recent events in Syria make it clear that the country cannot return to the way it was before. A political transformation is underway, and that transformation must lead to democracy and respect for the universal rights of the Syrian people. President Asad has a choice: lead this transformation or get out of the way.
- **U.S. Policy:** The Administration's policy has been consistent in strongly condemning violence and arrests against peaceful protestors, while urging the Syrian government to respect the legitimate demands of its citizens. President Obama has signed an executive order imposing targeted sanctions against individuals and entities, and we have led the international community in calling a Special Session on Syria at the UN Human Rights Council and in pressuring Syria to withdraw its candidacy for the council.
- **Path Ahead:** While it is essential that we hold all those who commit human rights abuses to account, it is also vital that we do not get ahead of the Syrian people. Syria is a multi-confessional society with substantial minority communities that fear a sectarian conflict. Our actions moving forward must seek to avoid a worst-case post-Asad scenario featuring prolonged instability, sectarian bloodletting, and the possible influx of extremists leading eventually to a Sunni-dominated, likely Muslim Brotherhood-friendly regime. This would not only be a humanitarian disaster, it would also pose an existential threat to Israel and could turn back the fragile gains that have been made in Iraq.
- **(If Raised) Ambassador Ford:** Since the unrest began, Ambassador Ford has played a vital role in obtaining the release of several American citizens who

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were detained by the Syrian security services and provided invaluable insights into the thinking of senior regime figures and opposition leaders. The media blackout in Syria has made the importance of reliable diplomatic reporting paramount.

Background: Rep. Ackerman, Ranking Member of the HFAC Middle East subcommittee, is planning to put out a statement regarding Syria and would like to discuss recent events there with you. Rep. Ackerman was unable to attend the HFAC hearing last week on Middle East issues, where much of the discussion focused on Syria and concerns about the Administration response. However, many of the other members at the hearing railed about the Syrian crackdown and the numbers of demonstrators killed and expressed concern that the Administration response is not forceful enough, themes Ackerman's staff has also raised.

Call Notes:

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