

RELEASE IN PART  
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**From:** Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 7, 2012 8:09 AM  
**To:** H  
**Subject:** NYT

Interesting editorial in the Times that basically [redacted] Also refers to your Turkey trip. I'm nervous that everyone is buying the "Asad on ropes" story to early. B5

#### EDITORIAL

#### If Assad Falls in Syria

Published: August 6, 2012

President Bashar al-Assad's security forces are continuing to kill Syrians in huge numbers, but the opposition's chances of prevailing look better than they did six months ago. The challenge for the United States and its partners is not just to step up the pressure, but also to prepare the ground for a constructive future for Syria. The opposition scored a psychological victory on Monday when

Prime Minister Riyad Farid Hijab defected to Jordan. Opposition leaders said that he brought along at least two ministers and three military officers. Mr. Hijab, a Sunni Muslim, wasn't part of Mr. Assad's inner circle, but he was the most senior civilian official and his defection is another sign of stress on the regime.

#### The rebels are challenging the Syrian Army

in the cities of Damascus and Aleppo, but the fighting is likely to get worse. The conflict has already intensified splits among the Sunni, Alawite and Christian communities; displaced thousands within Syria; sent thousands of refugees into neighboring countries and threatened to destabilize the region. And there is increasing evidence that

Al Qaeda and other jihadists have joined the fight.

The most viable diplomatic solution was a plan by the United Nations and the Arab League that would have eased Mr. Assad out of power and begun a democratic transition. But Russia — with Iran, Mr. Assad's main protector — ensured it would fail by arming the regime and refusing to impose sanctions.

The Obama administration and NATO have wisely resisted direct military involvement. That may change if, for example, Mr. Assad tries to use chemical weapons against his people.

For months, the administration has been increasing its involvement with the rebels — organizing a 130-nation pressure group, working to unify opposition factions, helping them plan a political transition, providing intelligence and medical aid and vetting which groups are extremists and which should get arms.

The administration has also begun to think beyond Mr. Assad's fall by planning how to cope with a new wave of refugees, maintain basic municipal services, restart a devastated economy and prevent the security forces from disintegrating. American officials seem to have learned the lesson of Iraq, where the government collapsed, leaving chaos behind. There is no guarantee Syria's rebels will want the help, but the administration has to be prepared to invest real money in these plans if they do.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton will have a chance to emphasize support for the rebels when she visits Turkey later this week. The United States also needs to intensify sanctions on Syria and keep urging Russia to cooperate in ending the conflict.