

RELEASE IN PART B6

From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, February 7, 2012 3:22 PM
To: H
Subject: FW: Syria Update - Russian Team back in Moscow

Worth a read.

From: Solomon, Howard T
Sent: Tuesday, February 07, 2012 02:59 PM
To: Logsdon, Kent D; Carpenter, Michael R; Russell, Daniel A; 'Christopher Mizelle' [redacted]
 [redacted] 'Woodward_Price' [redacted]
Cc: Gwaltney, Sheila S; Kruzich, Joseph; Carlon, Amy C; Silberberg, Jules D
Subject: Fw: Syria Update - Russian Team back in Moscow

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Fyi- from our crack spokesman Joe K

From: Joseph Kruzich [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, February 07, 2012 01:14 PM
To: McFaul, Michael A; Gwaltney, Sheila S; Solomon, Howard T; Harutunian, Ruben; Hurley, Michael J
Cc: Amy C. Carlon <[redacted]>
Subject: Syria Update - Russian Team back in Moscow

Just talked to my contact that traveled with Lavrov and company to Damascus today. Here is what he had to say about today's events in Damascus:

- As mentioned by Lavrov earlier in Damascus before leaving for Moscow, Assad promised to talk with opposition, open up political process, put in place new constitution that removes political monopoly of Assad's Bath party, allows political opposition and creates more free institutions. Assad also promised to work with Arab league to reduce violence and bring all parties together to create peace and stability in Syria. Contact noted that his sources in the Russian delegation noted that the meeting was "very hollow", in the sense that they thought Assad was just mouthing these platitudes. No one was really sure Assad would really act on them, but they would all trump them up in the media as a face saving gesture for Russia (contact's interpretation)
- Contact said that Lavrov noted that Assad appeared to be very self-confident, in full control and not someone who looked distraught and on the verge of losing power. Lavrov never pressed Assad on leaving power according to source.
- Contact said he had sense from one or two sources in Lavrov entourage that the trip was not a great success and Lavrov was somewhat disappointed by trip, notwithstanding the public statements.
- Contact noted that the arrival in Damascus was kind of surreal with the motorcade surrounded by well-wishers waiving Russian flags and chanting slogans in support of Russia. Some of it seemed genuine but most reminded contact of the Polkolny Gora event on Saturday in Moscow in support of Putin; event was very much staged and much of the emotion seemed feigned.
- Contact said they had a chance to spend some time with a RIA-Novosti reporter in Damascus who is an Arabist and has been there for a dozen years. This reporter noted that Assad is widely despised across Syria, though support in Damascus is fairly strong and there is a lot of fear of Syria descending into a hellish civil war along sectarian lines. RIA reporter compared situation there with Russia, saying many want change, many hate their leader (Syrians hate Assad, Russians despise Putin), but few want revolutionary change; they want reform.

I'll have a follow up meeting in the next day or two to see if he gets anything more from MFA contacts. All in all, eventful day for the Russian team, but they didn't come away with much and in their view Assad still looks like he is staying (but who really knows). Lavrov people told source they are hoping to go back to UNSC to move the process along and maybe get a new resolution, but he didn't have a good sense for how serious they were and what form a new resolution might take. There was talk of following up with a new Arab-sponsored resolution.

thats all for now. Wish i had better news to report. Best, Joe

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Joseph Kruzich

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