

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Sunday, February 26, 2012 7:35 AM
To: H
Subject: Burns-Denisov

Reached First Dep FM Denisov at 630 am DC time. In lengthy and sometimes contentious call, pressed hard along lines of pts provided by Phil and Jake W. Emphasized that this msg came from highest levels of USG, and repeated several times that situation increasingly desperate in Homs (esp Baba Amr), and temporary humanitarian ceasefire desperately needed. Russia has publicly called for attention to humanitarian situation. Now is time to act. We still have deep differences over broader issue, but we ought to be able to set those aside to produce this basic, time-limited humanitarian action. The alternative is a human catastrophe, and growing radicalization of the situation.

Denisov listened carefully. He acknowledged our serious differences, and made a passing reference to "the harsh rhetoric from your side." He insisted that Russia is also concerned about the human plight of Homs, although he claimed that R understands that some wounded and children are getting out. I told him bluntly that's not what we understood.

I emphasized again the urgent need to act, and R's unique ability to act with Assad.

Denisov said he appreciated and shared that concern, "speaking personally." He would relay the message immediately to Lavrov and Kremlin. He said he urged us, in turn, to press oppositionist fighters to cease fire too around Homs, and to "get your friends who are supplying them, like the Turks" to also press same message. I said it is bombardment from regime forces which is preventing humanitarian access. Key to temp ceasefire in Homs is to get to Asad right away, before it is too late.

Denisov said he would try to get approval for Syrian embassy in Damascus to weigh in later today. I urged him to press Assad at highest level, since nothing else would likely get through. He said he understood, but made no promises. We agreed to stay in touch today, and I told him Mike also stood ready to talk further.

Very hard to say whether any of this sunk in. D's claim that humanitarian sit not as bad as portrayed is disturbing. About all I can say is that D registered high level and urgency of our concern, and that this is moment to try to focus on immediate humanitarian problem and set aside continuing political differences between us. We'll see -- am not very optimistic.

Would be good for Denis to follow up with Kislyak, if possible, to reinforce msg.