DRAFT REMARKS
Ambassador Anne W. Patterson
Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs

Ninth Anniversary of the Cedar Revolution
U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C.
April 28, 2014, 5:00 p.m.

Thank you. Distinguished Members of Congress, Ambassador Chedid, it is a pleasure to be here with you this evening, among so many distinguished Americans of Lebanese descent and other friends of Lebanon.

We are here this evening to recall the spirit of national pride and independence that brought hundreds of thousands of Lebanese to the streets of Beirut in 2005 in the extraordinary uprising we now call the Cedar Revolution. Lebanon's broadly democratic demand for change had been building during years of Syrian occupation, but was sparked by indignation over the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. At the time, such a broad outpouring of public sentiment against authoritarian rule was unusual, but the justifiable Lebanese demand for an end to an era of Syrian military occupation and political violence in the country also foreshadowed demands for change and accountability that we see today elsewhere across the region.

Regrettably, some of the shadows of 2005 have returned. Hizballah fighters have crossed from Lebanon to fight in the Syrian civil war on behalf of the Asad regime against the agreement of all Lebanese parties in the Baabda Declaration. The civil war there has spawned a new refugee crisis in Lebanon, and attracted terrorists from Syria into Lebanon. Extremist violence is rising and political assassinations have continued, as we saw in the murder of our friend Mohammad Chatah last December.

But the Lebanese people are strong in the face of such provocations, keeping alive the spirit of the Cedar Revolution. The country has a long tradition of political pluralism. We have a new, fully-empowered government. The Lebanese can, should, and must choose their own leaders, and upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections are opportunities to do so. We urge that they go forward in accordance with the Lebanese constitution, on time, and free from foreign interference.

The United States and Lebanon have a long-standing partnership, and we will continue to support Lebanese efforts to build a stable, sovereign, independent, and prosperous country. We are committed to helping strengthen the institutions of the Lebanese state – including the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces – to help them provide security for all Lebanese citizens, establish security on Lebanon's borders, including the one with Syria, and extend the state's authority to all corners of the country. Our support for Lebanon includes programs that aim to advance economic opportunities and strengthen civil society, and we have robust education programs, including the provision of scholarships to Lebanese students, to help prepare future generations of leaders. The United States supports the people of Lebanon in their desire to build a democratic government that respects universal rights.

The U.S. has contributed more than $340 million in humanitarian assistance to support the many Lebanese communities that are hosting refugees from the Syrian civil war. Ongoing American programs provide clean water and improved sanitation across Lebanon, vaccinate children across the country, and support Lebanese efforts to strengthen the quality and capacity of Lebanese public schools, where so many refugees from Syria have enrolled. The United States will meet the humanitarian call for assistance.

We also call on all Lebanese parties to respect the principles laid out in the Baabda Declaration, the Taif Accord, and UN Security Council Resolutions 1559 and 1701. And we are working with Lebanon's international friends, particularly the International Support Group, to provide practical support that buttresses the Lebanese people's own calls for an end to intervention in foreign conflicts, an end to the cycle of violence, and the seizing of the opportunity Lebanon has to have a government, a president and a parliament that can help them meet the many challenges Lebanon faces.

One of the enduring legacies of the Cedar Revolution is the call for accountability and justice for those who have committed heinous acts of violence. We will continue to support the Special Tribunal for Lebanon because we recognize the need for accountability and an end to impunity for those who use violence to advance their political ends. We must not forget that this attack also led to the deaths of 21 others; their families demand justice just as the nation of Lebanon did in the streets of Beirut nine years ago.