



Statement

Committee on International Relations

U.S. House of Representatives
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**Statement by
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Before the
Committee on International Relations
U.S. House of Representatives**

**U.S Libya Relations
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I am honored to have the opportunity to appear before your distinguished committee. I am happy to take part in these hearings as a strong supporter of the on going process of restoring our diplomatic relationship with the Libyan regime and the Libyan people.

When I had the distinct honor to testify before your subcommittee on Africa in July of 1999, then, I strongly advocated direct contacts with the Libyan regime through constructive engagement. That memorable moment of my life marked the beginning of a long journey with a wish list (see testimony before the subcommittee on Africa July 22, 1999) which I took to many members of congress, and to active and non active members of our administrations as well as to the Libyan regime and its President himself Colonel Mummar Qaddafi.

Our engagement policy with the Libyan regime has resulted in the recent remarkable turn of events. – The voluntary dismantling by the Libyan regime of its weapons of mass destruction (WMD), nuclear, and missiles programs and allowing weapons inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), US and British scientists, and finally the conclusion of the Lockerbie case for the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 which exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988.

In my opinion, it is a grave mistake to misinterpret Libya's decision with regard to doing away with WMD as due to the war we have undertaken in Iraq. It is a fallacy to assume that the Libyan regime feared that what happened in Iraq can happen in Libya. Those of us who followed the US government's engagement with the Libyan regime since early 2001 with respect to WMD, terrorism, and the Lockerbie case affirm otherwise. To make the wrong assumptions here would trivialize and poorly undermine the awesome power of dialogue and engagement. We must positively acknowledge the courageous steps taken by the Libyan regime and its leadership.

Ladies and Gentlemen: Without a shadow of a doubt, our interests have clearly been served and have been served very well. No one would have imagined so much progress just a short time ago. These accomplishments would, in my opinion, justify that we embark upon a more

aggressive approach of an immediate and permanent lifting of trade sanctions, and the establishment of full diplomatic relations.

We must be reminded that UN sanctions and embargoes that were imposed on the Libyan people since 1981, crippled the economic structure, and social fabric of the Libyan people, who endured severe hardships. The UN sanctions degraded the quality of life and exasperated human rights efforts in Libya. Sanctions have inflicted serious damage and caused great economic losses in the billions of dollars in health, agriculture, oil and many other sectors of Libyan society.

Moving quickly to restore full diplomatic relations and lifting of sanctions would truly signal a policy based on **enlightened self-interest** which is far superior to one driven by strictly economic or political interests. Our foreign policy must stay consistent with American values and democratic ways. The requirements of civil society, moral and human elements must always supersede, narrowly defined endeavors.

The Libyan people were in a **quandary**: On one hand they suffered and barely recovered from under crippling UN sanctions, that lasted more than fifteen years, while, at the same time, they were oppressed by the Libyan regime.

It was an historic moment when Amnesty international was allowed to enter Libya late last month. Shortly after Amnesty International's findings, over one thousand political prisoners celebrated their re-union with their families.

The speed by which we restore full and total normalization of relations with the Libyan regime, would serve the interest of both, the American and Libyan people. It would also make us more in harmony and consonance with the wishes of a broad sector of the world community.

I could not be more pleased at the flurry of activities between the two nations in the past 60 days from congressional delegation visits to scientific, medical and business exchanges. Today the first wave of Libyan business and civic leaders will be arriving in Washington DC. An exhibition soccer game between the Libyan national team and an American one, was only a wish for me a few years go will become a reality in just a few weeks.

I am confident that the American business community as well as the Libyan American and Arab American communities can provide excellent academic, scientific and business resources and can play a positive and constructive role. It is an opportunity for genuine cooperation between Americans, Libyan Americans and their motherland.

Libya's unique and beautiful coast line, year long lush green mountains, its close proximity to Europe and the gates of Africa, its treasures of thousands of years of history, and most of all its wealth with natural resources place Libya as an important player on the world scene.

Let us open the flood gates for academic, scientific, cultural and business exchanges. In the process let us not impose our values but share them instead, and exercise sensitivity to the culture of the Libyan people, feelings and their sense of pride.

Let us combine our American enterprise and ingenuity and cooperate with the Libyan people to build the greatest railroad network spanning from North to the rest of Africa. A monument will be remembered for generations to come.