

## Rothman Questions Secretary of State Powell on Middle East Security Issues at Congressional Hearing

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Questions Secretary About Arms Flowing to Terrorists

Washington, DC -- Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) questioned U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell about Middle East security issues during a recent hearing of the House Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee.

Rothman questioned Secretary Powell about recent allegations that arms have been flowing through Egypt and Jordan to the Palestinian Authority to be used to perpetrate terrorism against innocent Israelis.

"We presently give over \$2 billion in [U.S.] aid of one kind or another to Egypt and to Jordan," Rothman said. "If [the allegations] are true, how we could make sure that our friends, the Jordanians and the Egyptians, do not permit that to happen anymore, if in fact it has happened already," Rothman asked Powell.

Secretary Powell responded, "I'm aware about some reporting of weapons entering the southern end of the Gaza Strip. And I have raised it with my Egyptian colleagues, and they suggest they will do nothing to support such things, will act against it, and it enjoys no support from Egypt. Egypt is strongly against that kind of activity." He added that he has not been made aware of any acts of arms smuggling to the Palestinian Authority from Jordan and thus had not raised this issue with that nation.

After the hearing, Rothman promised to keep a close eye on these and other security matters involving the State of Israel and to maintain pressure on the Bush Administration to keep America's commitment to Israel.

Also during the hearing, Rothman blasted Syrian President Bashar al-Assad for his recent anti-Semitic remarks, including Assad's comment that Israeli society is "more racist than the Nazis."

"It's absolutely disgusting and revolting that there was not sufficient worldwide criticism [of Assad]," Rothman said to Secretary Powell. "I know that you and others in our Administration have criticized his behavior. That behavior is not only wrong, morally wrong and factually wrong; it also damages any possibility that we would have any kind of inclination to be friendly towards that regime."

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