

David Satterfield: Syria 'directly responsible' for situation in Lebanon

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PARIS (AFP) — Syria is "directly responsible" for the political crisis in Lebanon and the accompanying violence, a senior US state department official said in Paris on Friday.

"I would describe the situation as one of continuing blockage and the continued eruption of violence in Lebanon ... We regard Syria as directly responsible for this situation," said David Satterfield, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's representative for Iraq.

"The role Syria has to play is very simple: to allow the Lebanese to proceed with free elections. It's not a complicated proposition," he said.

Satterfield had talks with President Nicolas Sarkozy's foreign affairs advisor Jean-David Levitte and officials from the French foreign ministry.

He said Damascus had taken action to reduce the number of anti-American insurgents passing into Iraq from Syria, but had done so mainly for its own internal reasons.

"These are dangerous individuals. They are individuals fundamentally threatening to Syria's interests as well. They are not good people to have in your country.

"Syria we believe did take certain steps (but) we do not believe the Syrians have taken any steps for the sake of Iraq to constrain this flow. Whatever they have done has been solely for the regime's own security purposes," he said.

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