

## Carter defends Pelosi's Syria trip

by UPI

WASHINGTON - Former President Jimmy Carter says he supports House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's trip to Syria, despite criticism of the visit by the Bush administration.

Pelosi, D-Calif., arrived in Syria Tuesday for meetings with Syrian leaders and to discuss the country's support for militant groups with President Bashar Al-Assad, CNN reported Thursday.

"I was glad that she went," Carter said. "When there is a crisis, the best way to help resolve the crisis is to deal with the people who are instrumental in the problem."

The former president said there was "no threat" that Pelosi's trip would damage the U.S. position on Syria.

President Bush had said earlier that the trip was "counterproductive" and would send mixed signals.

"Photo opportunities and/or meetings with President Assad lead the Assad government to believe they're part of the mainstream of the international community, when, in fact, they're a state sponsor of terror," Bush said.

Pelosi said that during her talks with Syrian leaders she focused on issues that she and Bush agree on.

"On the issues that we set before the president (of Syria)," she said, "there is no division among us or between our congressional delegation in Congress and the president of the United States."

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