



Greetings from the Project on Middle East Democracy!

Last week was a very busy week for Congress, with the introduction of a key bill to formally kick off the Congressional effort to reform U.S. foreign assistance. Other bills introduced last week aimed to expand existing sanctions legislation against Iran, to support women's rights and empowerment in Afghanistan, to authorize \$500 million in assistance to Pakistan, and to recognize yesterday, May 3, as World Press Freedom Day. Meanwhile, the House and Senate both passed the conference version of the FY2010 Concurrent Budget Resolution, allowing Congress to shift its attention to the FY09 supplemental spending bill and to the FY10 appropriations process. In the Middle East, speculation heated up surrounding next month's key elections in Iran and Lebanon. This week, look for hearings and debates to address U.S. policy in Pakistan and human rights concerns in Egypt.

For more detailed coverage of the debates surrounding U.S. foreign policy and the prospects for democracy in the Middle East, be sure to check out our blog, the [POMED Wire](#).

# The Weekly Wire

May 4, 2009

## *Legislation*

On Tuesday (4/28), **Chairman Howard Berman** (D-CA) of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs introduced [H.R.2139](#), the **Initiating Foreign Assistance Reform Act of 2009**. The bill was [described](#) by Berman as "an important first step to reforming and improving the U.S. foreign assistance program, particularly with respect to developing countries." The bill would require the President to establish a "United States Foreign Assistance Evaluation Advisory Council," to assist in developing and implementing a "National Strategy for Global Development." Such a strategy would more clearly articulate the roles of the various government agencies that work on development issues abroad, and include a comprehensive approach to further the United States foreign policy objective of promoting global development. The bill includes numerous amendments to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, with Chairman Berman still intending to introduce a major rewrite of that act later this year. The bill was referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

On Tuesday (4/28), **Sen. Evan Bayh** (D-IN), introduced [S.908](#), the **Iran Refined**

**Petroleum Sanctions Act of 2009**, which would expand the existing Iran Sanctions Act of 1996 to bar any import of refined petroleum into Iran, ban the import of any technology into Iran that could be used to refine petroleum, and also ban any activity that could contribute to Iran's ability to import refined petroleum. The bill would also allow the President to bar foreign companies engaging in these activities from conducting business in the United States. The bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs. On Thursday (4/30), **Chairman Howard Berman** (D-CA) of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs introduced [H.R.2194](#), a House version of essentially the same bill, with very minor adjustments. The bill was referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, as well as to the House Committees on Financial Services, Oversight and Government Reform, and Ways and Means.

On Tuesday, [H.Con.Res.36](#), was passed by a voice vote in the House and was referred on Wednesday to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. The concurrent resolution, originally introduced by **Rep. Robert Wexler** (D-FL) in February, calls on the President and the allies of the United States to raise in all appropriate bilateral and multilateral fora the case of Robert Levinson at every opportunity, urges Iran to fulfill their promises of assistance to the family of Robert Levinson, and calls on Iran to share the results of its investigation into the disappearance of Robert Levinson with the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

On Tuesday, **Sen. Judd Gregg** (R-NH) introduced [S.917](#), a bill that amends the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to specifically authorize the President to provide up to \$500 million in foreign assistance to Pakistan. The bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

On Tuesday, **Rep. Scott Garrett** (R-NJ) introduced [H.Con.Res.111](#), recognizing the 61<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the independence of the State of Israel. The concurrent resolution was referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

On Wednesday (4/29), the House and Senate House and Senate both passed the conference version of the **FY10 Concurrent Budget Resolution**, [S.Con.Res.13](#), which included \$51 billion for the FY10 International Affairs Budget, \$2.8 billion below President Obama's request of \$53 billion. The \$51 billion level represents a compromise between the House Budget Committee's approved level of \$48.5 billion and the Senate Budget Committee's approved level of \$53.8 billion. The House passed the budget by a vote of [233-193](#) and the Senate passed the resolution in a [53-43](#) vote on the same day. [Click here](#) for the text of the International Affairs Function 150 Account portion of the Conference Report to accompany the bill.

On Thursday (4/30), the Senate passed [S.615](#), a bill to provide additional personnel authorities for the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, by unanimous consent. The bill, introduced by **Sen. Susan Collins** (R-ME) in March, gives added authority to the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, currently **Major General Arnold Fields**, over issues of employment.

On Thursday, **Sen. Russell Feingold** (D-WI) introduced [S.Res.124](#), a resolution recognizing the threats to press freedom and expression around the world and reaffirming press freedom as a priority in the efforts of the United States to promote democracy and good governance, on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day on May 3, 2009. The resolution was passed on the same day by the full Senate by

unanimous consent.

On Thursday, **Rep. Randy Forbes** (R-VA) introduced **H.R.2207** [text not yet available], a bill which aims to establish a Commission to examine the long-term global challenges facing the United States and develop legislative and administrative proposals to improve interagency cooperation. The bill was referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and to the House Committee on Rules.

On Thursday, **Rep. Carolyn Maloney** (D-NY) introduced **H.R.2214** [text not yet available], a bill aiming to empower women in Afghanistan. The bill was referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

### *Congressional Hearings*

On Thursday (4/30), Secretaries **Clinton** and **Gates** [appeared before the Senate Appropriations Committee](#) to discuss the administration's \$83.4 billion Emergency Supplemental request for FY09. The U.S. Global Leadership Campaign provides a good [breakdown of the allocation of funds](#), highlighting that "[t]he supplemental includes \$7.1 billion for the International Affairs Budget primarily for assistance programs and embassy operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan."

In her [opening statement](#), Secretary Clinton outlined how U.S. foreign policy is built on the three Ds of defense, diplomacy, and development; advocating the importance of greater collaboration between the Departments of Defense and State along with USAID. Secretary Gates [reiterated this point](#), expressing the need to face today's challenges from all sides. He argued that this can "only be done if the State Department is given resources befitting the scope of its mission across the globe."

### *In Washington*

**The U.S. and Elections in Lebanon:** Last Sunday, **Secretary Clinton** made [a quick stop in Lebanon](#) six weeks ahead of the country's critical parliamentary elections. She expressed support for a "strong, independent, free and sovereign Lebanon" which [some argued](#) was "more of a partisan cry of support for March 14 and a signal to March 8 that the U.S. is watching." Meanwhile, others expect the margin of victory [to be narrow](#), and argued that if the pro-Syrian March 8 alliance wins then "Washington will have to [find a way to finesse](#)."

**Renewing the Peace Process:** Reflecting on **King Abdullah's** recent visit to Washington, during which he emphasized the Arab position on the [two-state solution](#), one analyst asserted that it "could very well prove to be the [most important diplomatic mission carried by an Arab leader in recent memory](#)." Others commended the administration's forceful public commitment to a two-state solution but argued that "the time for listening is coming to an end, and now it is [time for the U.S. to begin to act](#)."

It appears action is in the works as the [Emergency Supplemental request](#) contains a provision that would allow the U.S. to continue funding the Palestinian Authority if Fatah and Hamas form a unity government and Hamas meets three conditions. But some interpreted this to mean that the administration's plan "would [allow the PA to](#)

[receive American aid](#) as long as the Hamas members of the coalition government met America's three criteria, even if Hamas as an organization did not."

**Fighting Corruption in Iraq and Afghanistan:** In discussing [rampant corruption and mismanagement of aid money](#) in Iraq and the U.S. government's seeming unwillingness to address the problem, one analyst concluded that the "[State Department should not control development assistance](#) [and] credible commitment is crucial to success." It was also argued that America should take a lesson from the Taliban and show [zero tolerance for official corruption](#) in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, in a speech before the American embassy in Baghdad last weekend, **Secretary Clinton** stated, "I see diplomacy, development and defense as each supporting the [core components of American foreign policy](#): to protect our nation, to advance our interests, and to represent our best values, which is the greatest case we have to make to those who might wonder whether a future of democracy is in their best interests."

**Shifts in the U.S.-Iran:** Last week, some addressed the [emerging shifts](#) in the Discussing topics such as **President Obama's** [Nowruz message](#) and subsequent Iranian response, the centrality of the [Israel-Palestine issue](#), and the long [history of failed attempts](#) at reconciliation, some were more optimistic than others.

#### *Also Worth Reading*

On Friday, Freedom House [released](#) a new publication, *Freedom of the Press 2009, ahead of yesterday*, May 3, **World Press Freedom Day**. This year's report indicates a seventh consecutive year of decline in global press freedom, with twice as many countries showing a decline in press freedom as showing an improvement. The Middle East and North Africa continued to have the lowest ratings for press freedom of any region in the world, with 4 countries in the region rated as having a "Partly Free" press (Egypt, Israel, Kuwait, and Lebanon), and the remaining 17 countries having a "Not Free" press. In previous years' reports, Israel had been the only Middle Eastern country rated as having a "Free" press, but in the new report it was one of three countries worldwide downgraded from "Free" to "Partly Free," largely because of restrictions placed on journalists during the Gaza conflict. [Click here](#) for all of the materials accompanying the report's release, including an overview essay and tables of the scores for every country.

#### *In the Middle East*

**Making Sense of Regional Politics:** One analyst questioned how the issue of personal freedom will play out in [Iran's presidential election](#). While another focused on [Lebanon's parliamentary election](#), arguing that, "[President] **Sleiman** will gain most if he holds the balance in Parliament between a March 14 bloc on the one side and the alliance between Hizbullah, **Michel Aoun**, and **Nabih Berri** on the other." Meanwhile, some pointed out that the decision to push back [Iraq's parliamentary election](#) from December 2009 to February 2010 could throw a wrench in U.S. plans for troop withdrawal.

Others speculated on a [potential successor](#) to the aging **Hosni Mubarak**, that despite widespread speculation that **Gamal Mubarak** will replace his father, there is reason to believe the position will instead go to a military leader. It was reported last week that **Sheik Ali Hatem Sulaiman**, prince of Iraq's largest tribe, has been "trying to rally the support of tribes across Iraq for a tribal conference whose goal,

he says, will be to [replace the government](#) of **Prime Minister Nouri Maliki** unless certain, as yet unspecified, demands are met."

**Pakistan's Fight Against the Taliban:** Last week, Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, **Husain Haqqani**, [defended Pakistan's efforts to fight the Taliban](#) and also called on the U.S. to aid Pakistan's fight against Al Qaeda and other unreconcilable militants. But one commentator argued that [Pakistan has deeper problems](#) than Haqqani acknowledged. Others were also [skeptical about Islamabad's claims](#) that it is successfully beating back the Taliban.

**Blaming the Schools:** Some highlighted regional shortcomings in education, with one analyst [focusing on Saudi Arabia](#), arguing that "the Saudi religious curriculum, which couples rote memorization of texts with uncritical acceptance of tribal practices ... does not prepare students to cope with modernity, nor to be productive participants in an increasingly global economy." Another argued that [Pakistan's 12,500 madrassas](#) are graduating 2 million teenage boys a year who are largely sympathetic to fundamentalist groups like the Taliban, impeding the emergence of a strong Pakistani democracy.

### *In Case You Missed It*

On Monday (4/27) The Wilson Center, in coordination with the Safadi Foundation USA, conducted a discussion titled "Elections in Lebanon: Mapping Alliances and Managing Expectations." The event examined the latest developments regarding Lebanese elections to be held on June 7 and the regional dynamics of establishing consensus and stability in Lebanon. The event was moderated by **Haleh Esfandiari**, director of the Middle East Program at the Wilson Center. Panelists included **Ambassador C. David Welch**, Former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, **Paul Salem**, Director of the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut, and **Karim Sadjadpour**, an Associate of the Middle East Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. For POMED's full notes on this event, [click here](#).

Also on Monday, the American Enterprise Institute hosted a discussion on the possible impacts of June's presidential election on U.S.-Iranian relations, with a keynote address by **Senator Joseph Lieberman**. The panelists included AEI resident scholars **Frederick Kagan** and **Michael Rubin**, Brookings' **Kenneth Pollack**, and was moderated by **Thomas Donnelly**, resident fellow at AEI. For POMED's notes on this event [click here](#).

On Tuesday (4/28) The Protection Project at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) hosted a panel on Egypt's role in the Middle East peace process. The discussion also explored Egypt's domestic political situation. The panelists were Professor **Hossam Badrawi**, a member of the reformist wing of the ruling National Democratic Party and a member of the National Council for Human Rights, Mr. **Mounir Fakhri AbdelNour**, Secretary General of Al Wafd Party and also a member of the National Council for Human Rights, and Dr. **Abdel Monem Said**, Director of Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo. **Mohamed Mattar**, Executive Director of the Protection Project and a professor at Georgetown's Elliott School of International Affairs, moderated. To view POMED's notes on this discussion [click here](#).

Also on Tuesday, the Hudson Institute hosted an all-day event addressing the future

of the Muslim Brotherhood in light of recent developments, such as the election of Hamas and Iran's new regional assertiveness. Panel topics included "The Brotherhood within the Sunni-Shiite Rivalry," "The Brotherhood State in Gaza and Its Impact on Islamist Politics" "The Brotherhood and the Turkish Model," and "The Brotherhood in an Era of Al-Qaeda's Relative Decline." The following notes are focused on the second panel, "The Brotherhood State in Gaza," which included **Jonathan Schanzer**, **Ahmed al-Rahim**, and **Hassan Mneimneh**. To view POMED's notes on this discussion [click here](#).