



PROJECT on Middle East Democracy

www.pomed.org ♦ 1820 Jefferson Place NW ♦ Washington, DC 20036

"Promoting Security through Diplomacy and Development: The Fiscal Year 2011 International Affairs"

House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building
February 25, 2010, 9:30 AM – 12:15 PM

In a hearing on the administration's recently released budget request, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs invited Secretary of State **Hillary Clinton** to give testimony on particular budgetary items relating to U.S. diplomatic and development efforts abroad. Committee Chairman **Howard Berman** (D-CA) opened the hearing with an affirmation of the value of investing in international diplomacy; not only to promote American values, but also as a method of prevention in order to mitigate the forces that cause international instability. Berman pledged to work with his colleagues to maintain or even increase the overall level of funding – approximately 1 percent of the entire Fiscal Year 2011 federal budget request – but ranking Republican committee member **Ileana Ros-Lehtinen** (R-FL) disagreed, using the poor economic environment as the basis to call for "selective freezes." In particular, she questioned the wisdom of unconditionally funding the Palestinian Authority and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), both of which she accuses of stealing hundreds of millions in foreign aid.

Following these opening remarks, **Secretary Clinton** provided a overview of the FY2011 budget request for the State Department and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) – totaling \$52.8 billion – and emphasized her department's focus upon measurable results for every dollar spent. With regard to Iran, she articulated the administration's "dual track approach" that has exposed the Iranian regime internationally and helped achieve a new level of unity with international partners. "We are developing a new architecture of cooperation to meet international challenges," Clinton said, specifically highlighting three areas of significant investment: **Security of front-line states such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq; international development; and the recruitment of talented and dedicated civil servants** (see [POMED's notes](#) on Clinton's remarks to the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee for a more detailed description of these investments).

The secretary then took questions from committee members, starting with **Chairman Berman** who asked about Iranian sanctions and, more precisely, how the administration will reconcile the dueling concerns of economic deprivation for the Iranian people and a destabilizing Iranian nuclear capability. Clinton responded by commending **President Obama** for his approach toward Iran thus far; **offering the Iranian leadership the opportunity to engage in a serious way revealed to the international community the true nature of the regime's intransigence.** "The fact that the Iranian regime has failed to respond and has shown its brutality toward its own people," she said, "has demonstrated to the world what Iran's ambitions are and how likely Iran is to engage in a serious manner." To that end, Clinton described an "intensive consultation process around what we see are the most effective approaches – our efforts with the UN Security Council should not be seen as our only efforts." She defended the administration's approach of cultivating an international coalition that will apply broadly-

based pressure upon Iran's regime.

Congresswoman **Ileana Ros-Lehtinen** used the Iranian challenge to discuss the UN Human Rights Council, questioning why the U.S. joined the deliberative body "if we were going to do nothing." Clinton refuted this claim, pointing to the **substantial U.S. participation in Iran's recent Universal Periodical Review**. Ros-Lehtinen conceded this point, but still expressed her frustration that the U.S. had yet to sponsor a session on any number of human rights issues in countries of concern.

Pivoting to Israel and Palestine, Congressman **Gary Ackerman** (D-NY) asked the secretary how the U.S. should handle the Goldstone Report, which he believes is a deeply flawed and grossly biased document. "If the report is accepted as an international standard," he said, "it's not hard to envision what would happen to our country – in terms of our travel capability, or the safety and security of our former officials." **Clinton generally agreed that the report had a number of deficiencies, although she framed the issue around what she believes is the report's poor understanding of the right to self defense**. But despite these problems, she maintained that the report warrants a thorough review by all relevant parties.

Congressman **Donald Payne** (D-NJ) lamented the budget's reduction in aid for Sudan, but Clinton countered by pointing out that the request actually increases aid by 3 percent over the FY2010 estimate. She also addressed his concern about Morocco's behavior in Western Sahara by affirming the administration's support for the ongoing UN process.

Next up, Representative **Dan Burton** (R-IN) expressed his hope that the new Iranian sanctions bill will move quickly through reconciliation and onto the president's desk, but **also advocated a much stronger approach in the form of air-strikes to eliminate the existing nuclear facilities should Iran move closer to producing a nuclear weapon**. However, Clinton reiterated that **"our policy is to rally the international community for the broadest and most effective sanctions that can be brought to bear on the regime, and thereby influence its decision-making."** She also pointed out the benefits of IAEA support since its viewed as an independent source and has a tremendous amount of credibility.

Continuing with Iran, Congressman **Brad Sherman** (D-CA) requested an explanation for the decades-long "mockery" of the existing Iranian sanctions act. Clinton answered that the **administration initiated a thorough review of relationships with the Iranian energy sector and continues to work with the intelligence community to identify Iranian companies worthy of greater scrutiny**.

Representative **Eliot Engel** (D-NY) expressed confusion over the recently nominated ambassador to Syria since he "hasn't seen any change in Syria's behavior." However, **Clinton clarified that the restoration of diplomatic relations wasn't a "reward," but rather a way to enhance our leverage in the region by having an ambassador on the ground in Damascus**.

Shifting gears to the upcoming Iraqi election, Congressman **Bill Delahunt** (D-MA) asked the secretary to detail what the administration is doing about the apparent Iranian attempts to manipulate the election results. Clinton acknowledged that Iran and other neighbors are trying to influence the outcome – "but at the same time we see that on balance the Iraqis are much more nationalistic and much more willing to stand up for themselves." **She emphasized the administration's efforts to ensure a large electoral turnout as well as a high number of observers**. "We will be very active in the government formation process."

Congressman **Ron Paul** (R-TX) focused upon the U.S. deficit and the growth in the international affairs budget over the past decade. "At the same time," he said, "real wages of workers have gone down, and a lot of us can't justify the amount of money we spend around the world since a lot of our constituents don't feel safer." Part of this tremendous increase, according to Clinton, resulted from assuming so many of the post-conflict responsibilities, which she says represents the bulk of the budget increases.

Referencing Obama's Cairo speech last June, Congressman **Russ Carnahan (D-MO)** asked Clinton to "provide us with some details about what you hope to accomplish" from the **Global Engagement Fund, which will focus on human development issues**. Clinton replied that a number of new approaches arose from Cairo: **enhancing public diplomacy outreach; using more of America's tools such as science, technology, and our communication strength; and establishing more English language programs for young people**. "All these programs bring a different message," she said. But she also urged the committee "not to forget that there's a very diverse population throughout the Muslim world," meaning that what works in one place doesn't necessarily translate elsewhere.

In response to a question from Representative **Dana Rohrabacher** (R-CA) about whether or not the president's "conciliatory tone toward Iran" has been looked upon as a sign of weakness, Clinton defended Obama's method of engagement and reminded the committee that there is still a dual track approach: **Establishing credibility throughout the world by first reaching out to Iran works well in concert with sanctions and broadly-based pressure**. Rohrabacher followed up by asking if this tone has disheartened those protesting in the streets, but Clinton assured him that a number of dissidents and opposition leaders she has met with have commended the president on his tone and approach.

Congressman **Brad Miller** (D-NC) used his time to ask the secretary about Yemen and how the administration is making sure that U.S. aid is both effective and anticipating future problems. **Clinton alluded to the recent London Conference to point out that the Yemeni government has a "plan for development that is sensible and acknowledges many of their shortcomings,"** and she pledged U.S. support to help them fulfill their own objectives.

Showing concern for Sudan as it approaches its forthcoming elections, Congressman **John Boozman** (R-AR) asked about the level of U.S. involvement. Clinton admitted that **"we have to do more to help southern Sudan prepare for whatever future it chooses"** – referring to an upcoming referendum on independence – and said that "we're committing more development and financial assets to that end."

Finally, Congressman **Keith Ellison** (D-MN) asked for the secretary's thoughts on UNRWA and how to circumvent some of the existing obstacles to more effectively get humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people. Clinton responded by hailing UNRWA as a "valuable group that provides services that would otherwise be provided by violent groups, making it an indispensable counterweight to Hezbollah and Hamas." However, "we do closely monitor what it does, and that it both meets the requirements under our law and ensures the neutrality of its staff." She believes that we need to empower regular people – **"we must find a medium between undermining Hamas to support Israeli security, and helping everyday civilians so they don't turn to extremism."**