



Congressional Update – Mideast Update

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The House of Representatives has adjourned for the August recess and will reconvene on September 8, 2015. The Senate is in session this week with adjournment expected at the end of the week.

(1) Iran Update – The Iran Nuclear Agreement will be the focus of hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations and Senate Armed Services Committees this week. Over the August recess AIPAC will be ramping up its grassroots lobbying efforts and will be contacting members of Congress in their districts and making calls to supporters seeking pledges of money to assist its lobbying efforts.

Although opponents of the Agreement claim the Jewish community is united in its opposition to the Agreement, former Representative Mel Levine (Democrat-California) laced an op-ed in the Times of Israel in support of the Agreement (<http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/this-is-a-good-deal-2/>). Jeffrey Goldberg wrote in *the Atlantic* that Representative Adam Schiff (Democrat-California) now supports the Agreement (<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/08/adam-schiff-iran-nuclear/400280/>). Schiff is the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee. Representative Chris Van Hollen (Democrat-Maryland) also recently came out in support of the Agreement.

Several bills and resolutions have been introduced related to the Iran Agreement.

- **H.J.Res. 61:** Keep a watchful eye on the House resolution, introduced as the “Hire More Heroes Act of 2015”. The Senate is likely to use this House resolution as the legislative vehicle, possibly this week, as a “motion to proceed” with debate on a resolution of disapproval of the Iran Agreement. The Senate would amend the House resolution by inserting it text on a motion to proceed. A motion to proceed is employed by the Senate leader in order to bring up the bill for consideration when cannot do so by unanimous consent. Full debate and a vote on a resolution of disapproval is not expected until early September.
- **S.Res.238: To Extend the Congressional Review Period.** The resolution as introduced on July 30 by Senator Ted Cruz (Republican-Texas). The resolution expresses the determine of the Senate that the 60-day calendar period for congressional review period of the Agreement did not begin with the transmittal of the Agreement on July 19, 2015, because that transmittal did not include all Congress and signed into law by the President. The Resolution is pending before Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Several letters also have been sent by Members of Congress asking for clarification of agreements, which apparently members of Congress have not seen, to the JCPOA. (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action).

- On July 28, Representative Devin Nunes (Republican-California) sent a letter to Director of National Intelligence James Clapper requesting the Intelligence Community to provide three additional assessments related to Iran and the JCPOA, by September 3. All three requests appear to challenge the ones previously provided to Congress.
- On July 29 Senator John Tester (Democrat-Montana) sent a letter to President Obama requesting more information about the JCPOA. Tester wants to know specifically how Iranian nuclear research and development will be monitored to ensure Iran does not develop a nuclear weapon after the first decade of the agreement; how the Administration plans to prevent conventional arms and ballistic weapons technologies from going to Iran; and what measures will be in place to ensure the monies unfrozen by lifted sanctions will not be used for military or terrorist acts against the US and its allies.
- On July 28, Senator Tom Cotton (Republican-Arkansas) and Representative Mike Pompeo (Republican-Kansas) sent a letter to Energy Secretary Moniz, suggesting that Moniz withheld information about the side agreements with Iran during a recent House hearing. The letter demands that Moniz give a copy of the side agreements to Congress.

Secretary Kerry has said repeatedly that the side agreements between Iran and the IAEA are a separate issue from the JCPOA. The letter is little more than political grandstanding, since both Cotton and Pompeo have made it clear that they would oppose the Iran deal, regardless of the details. Cotton was behind the recent letter signed by 47 Senators opposing the Agreement, before it was even announced. In what can only be termed as “overkill”, Cotton and Pompeo and Representative Brad Sherman (D-California) also sent the same letter to Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman.

(2) Congressional Delegations to Israel – House Democratic Whip Representative Steny Hoyer (Democrat-Maryland), is leading a congressional delegation of approximately 20 Democrat members of Congress to Israel August 3 through August 10. Hoyer is one of Israel’s strongest supporters in the House and no doubt the delegation will hear many concerns about Israel’s security from Israeli officials with the Iran Nuclear Agreement the top priority. Hoyer has not publicly supported or opposed the agreement.

House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (Republican-California) is heading a congressional delegation of 20 freshmen Republican members to Israel next week, where no doubt the delegation will hear the same message from Israeli officials. McCarthy opposes the Iran Nuclear Agreement.

(3) Egypt – On July 27 Senators Ben Cardin (Democrat-Maryland), John McCain (Republican-Arizona), Tim Kaine Democrat-Virginia), Marco Rubio

(Republican-Florida), Chris Coons (Democrat-Delaware), Mark Kirk (Republican-Illinois), and Bob Casey (Democrat-Pennsylvania) sent a letter to Secretary of State Kerry ahead of the upcoming US-Egypt Strategic Dialogue, urging that political reform, human rights and fundamental freedom, be a key part of the agenda.

(4) BDS Hearing – On July 28 the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform’s Subcommittee on National Security held a hearing on the impact of the BDS movement. Testimony was heard from Daniel Birnbaum, CEO of SodaStream, Mark Dubowitz, Foundation for Defense of Democracies, Eugene Kontorovich, lead blogger for the Washing Post column the Volokh Conspiracy and, Matt Duss, Foundation for Middle East Peace. The hearing was pure political theatre and did nothing to promote Congress’s understanding of the movement. The hearing served as a forum witnesses and some members of Congress to exploit fears of the BDS movement in order to conflate Israel and the settlements and shift US policy to legitimize and protect Israeli settlements. Duss was singled out by Representative Steve Russell (Republican-Oklahoma) who personally attacked Duss, his family members and former colleagues, of being anti-Semites, based on statements and talking points fed to the Russell. Russell’s behavior was shameful but this is not the first time a member of Congress has personally attacked a witnesses.