



## Congressional Update April 18, 2016

### I. Israel/Palestine

**(1) UN Resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process.** On April 15 Representatives Doug Lamborn (R-Colorado) and Gwendolyn Graham (D-Florida) introduced **HConRes128**, a concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress that the United States should continue to exercise its veto in the United Nations Security Council on resolutions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The resolution has been referred to the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC). Click [here](#) for a text of the resolution. In introducing the resolution Lamborn said he opposed "...the disingenuous actions by the Palestinian Authority leadership to solicit condemnations of Israel and to extract land guarantees through the United Nations and not at the negotiating table. It is the long-standing U.S. practice to exercise its veto and opposition to such measures. That practice must continue."

**(2) Lowey/Granger Letter on Israeli-Palestinian Peace Tenets.** As reported in the March 23 Update, since late March Representatives Nita Lowey (D-New York) and Kay Granger (R-Texas) have proposed six non-controversial tenets for US policy regarding Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts. The letter reportedly was one of AIPAC's requests during its recent Washington Policy Conference. The letter also calls on the US to veto one-sided UN Security Council resolutions. The [letter](#) has been sent with 394 signatures. J Street, the liberal alternative to AIPAC, issued a [statement](#) generally supporting the tenets outlined in the letter.

**(3) FY 2017 Budget Request for the Middle East and North Africa.** On April 13, the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa held a hearing on the President's FY 2017 budget request for the Middle East and North Africa. Witnesses were: Anne W. [Patterson](#), Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs and Paige [Alexander](#), USAID Assistant Administrator for the Middle East. The hearing largely focused on a UN resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, the Muslim Brotherhood, and reports that Iran will have access to US dollars. Full Committee Chairman Ed Royce (R-California) urged Patterson to help put a stop to the PA's "perverse" program, which he said is funded through US foreign assistance, that pays stipends to Palestinians convicted of murder or terrorism against Israeli citizens. Royce also wants the European Community, in its dialogue with the US, to fully comprehend what is going on in this process. Patterson assured Royce and the panel that in her discussions with PA members this "egregious" practice was being phased out and the US will continue to press the Palestinians on this issue. However, Patterson also reiterated the importance of US assistance to the PA and that no US money goes for this purpose. The monies are for budget relief and cannot be diverted to these stipends.

Representative David Trott (R-Michigan) a cosponsor of the House bill (**HR3892**) designating the Muslim Brotherhood a Foreign Terrorist Organization, Ron DeSantis (R-Florida) and Darrell Issa (R-California) all questioned Patterson at length, demanding to know why the Administration has resisted declaring the MB a terrorist organization given the "overwhelming" evidence of the MB's involvement in and support for terrorism. Patterson emphatically told Trott the Administration does not consider the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization. It had denounced violence and is viewed as a legitimate political party. While they may have been some elements of the Brotherhood involved in terrorism the



organization, writ large, is not considered a terrorist organization. Trott announced he would work diligently to bring the bill to the House floor for a vote.

With respect to Iran, Patterson told the panel it was her understanding that Iran would not have access to the US financial system. She added the issue is under the authority of the Treasury Department which is holding discussions with businesses on how the US can do business in Iran, without giving Iran access to US dollars.

## II. Saudi Arabia

***Limiting Transfer of US Munitions to Saudi Arabia.*** On April 13, Senators Chris Murphy (D-Connecticut) and Rand Paul (R-Kentucky) introduced **SJRes 32, a joint resolution to provide limitations on the transfer of certain US munitions from the United States to Saudi Arabia.** Click [here](#) for Senator Murphy's press release on the bill. The text of the resolution is [here](#). The resolution has been referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC).

Under this legislation, the US would not be able to sell weapons to Saudi Arabia unless that government and its partners in Yemen take precautions to reduce the risk to civilians and civilian infrastructure bombing. The Kingdom also would have to facilitate humanitarian assistance in Yemen; show it is not providing funding, material support or lethal aid to designated foreign terrorist organizations and take all necessary measures to target designated foreign terrorist organizations in Yemen. In his statement, Murphy warned that continued unchecked support by the United States would have consequences. Murphy and other Democrats on the SFRC placed a hold on bomb transfers to Saudi Arabia last October because they wanted more answers about US assistance to Saudi conduct in the Yemen campaign. SFRC also increased its oversight to weapons shipments to the Kingdom in December, 2015. Since then, numerous reports have emerged detailing Saudi Arabia's use of US-made weapons against civilians in Yemen, but the tipping point appears to have been when US bombs were used in an air strike on a Yemeni market that killed at least 97 civilians, including 25 children, in mid-March.

In a recent *Defense News* article, Murphy conceded it will be an uphill fight to get significant support for the measure and that passage is unlikely. Murphy's goal appears to raise the level of discussion in Congress about the civil war in Yemen and the broader issue of arms sales to the Middle East. Nevertheless, the resolution has caused further tension in the bilateral relationship brought on by the President's recent interview in the *Atlantic* wherein he criticized the Kingdom, and recent legislation unrelated to arms sales (S2040), that would hold the Saudi government responsible in US courts for any role in the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

S2040 was introduced last September by Senators Jon Cornyn (R-Texas) and is pending on the Senate calendar. The bill currently has 22 cosponsors. It seems a small but vocal minority is pushing for passage of the bill. HR3815, introduced in November, 2015 by Representative Peter King (R-New York), a frequent critic of the Kingdom, is pending before the House Judiciary Committee and has only 14 cosponsors; no action is currently scheduled. The Obama Administration has lobbied Congress to block the bill, and the Saudi threat to sell off billions of dollars of US assets held by the Kingdom if the legislation is passed, has been the subject of discussion between Congress and the Administration.

Other observers believe despite these tensions, the demise of the US-Saudi relationship has been greatly exaggerated and the two countries will continue to cooperate on national security issues. Advocates for



the bilateral relationship, including Senate Armed Services Chairman John McCain (R-Arizona) and SFRC Chairman Bob Corker (R-Tennessee) continue to stress its importance.

### III. Iran

**(1) Intelligence Needed to Monitor and Enforce the JCPOA.** On April 14, Representative Sean Patrick Maloney (D-New York) introduced **HR4940, a bill to direct the Director of National Intelligence to establish an integration cell to monitor and enforce the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and for other purposes**” (also referred to as the “**JCPOA Intelligence Enforcement Act**.” The bill has been referred to the House Intelligence Committee.

Upon introduction, Maloney issued a press [release](#) explaining that the legislation would require the Director of National Intelligence to establish an intelligence integration cell among relevant intelligence agencies in order to integrate intelligence related to monitoring and enforcement of the JCPOA by: coordinating and synchronizing all collection related to implementation of the JCPOA; integrating early warning systems of intelligence agencies for potential violations of the JCPOA; and identifying intelligence gaps related to JCPOA monitoring. In addition it would encourage U.S. intelligence agencies to establish a joint fusion cell with our Middle Eastern allies which would: combat Iran’s disruptive regional activities including their support for terrorist proxy entities such as Hezbollah; find and disrupt illegal transfers of weapons and materials by Iran and its proxies; and protect the territory of key US regional allies. Lastly, the JCPOA Intelligence Enforcement Act would encourage the Director of National Intelligence to establish a U.S.-Israeli intelligence working group focused on enhancing intelligence sharing on: Iranian support for Hezbollah; Iranian weapons smuggling programs; Iran’s ballistic missile and space program; and Iran’s nuclear activities.

**(2) Block Iran’s Access to US Financial System.** On April 11, Representative David Trott (R-Michigan) introduced **HR4898, a bill to prohibit the Department of the Treasury from issuing licenses to permit offshore dollar clearing outside of the United States financial system for transactions involving or benefitting Iran** . Trott raised this issue during the April 13 hearing before the House Foreign Affairs Middle East and North Africa Subcommittee. Trott’s press release on the bill is [here](#). The bill has been referred to the House Financial Services Committee.