



Congressional Update

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I. Palestine/Israel

Israeli Settlements: On January 20, Senators Marco Rubio (R-Florida), Ron Wyden (D-Oregon) and Jim Risch (R-Idaho) introduce S.Res. 346, a resolution expressing opposition to the European Commission interpretive notice regarding labeling Israeli products and goods manufactured in the West Bank and other areas, as such actions undermine the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The resolution is pending before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC).

Congressional Letter Criticizing US Ambassador Shapiro: Representative Peter Roskam (R-Illinois) sent a letter to Secretary of State Kerry expressing his “alarm and disappointment” over comments made by U.S. Ambassador to Israel Daniel Shapiro at a conference in Tel Aviv. The starting point of Roskam’s lengthy letter is: “*Ambassador Shapiro troublingly questioned Israel’s ‘long-term intentions’ openly cast doubt upon the seriousness of its desire to reach peace with the Palestinians. These remarks do not reflect reality, yet they serve to empower those who wish to delegitimize and marginalize the Jewish state...*” Roskam closes by encouraging Kerry to “*reject these misguided comments and reaffirm our unbreakable support for Israel.*”

II. Iran

Iran Owes Americans: On January 20, Senator Jerry Moran (R-Kansas) introduced a bill (S.2458) that would prohibit the use of funds to make payments to Iran relating to the settlement of claims brought before the Iran-United States Claims Tribunal until Iran has paid certain compensatory damages awarded to United States persons by United States

courts.” Referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations. The bill is pending before the SFRC.

Iranian Missile Tests: On January 15, Senator David Perdue (R-Georgia) and 12 other Senators wrote to President Obama expressing their concern about Iran’s ballistic missile testing and asking the President to provide them with a roadmap of what the Administration considers illicit behavior by Iran and what sanctions or punitive steps will be taken in the event of such behavior.

III. Syrian and Iraqi Immigrations and the Visa Waiver Program

Pending Legislation on the Visa Waiver Program: On January 20 Senator Jeff Flake (R-Arizona) introduced a bill (S.2449) to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to remove limitation on the ability of certain dual citizens from participating in the Visa Waiver Program. The bill has pending before the Senate Judiciary Committee. The legislation would leave in place the restrictions on the Visa Waiver Program for people who have traveled to Iran.

III. US Strategy and Policy in the Middle East

On January 20, the Senate Armed Services held a hearing on US Strategy and Policy in the Middle East. Witnesses were: General John M. Keane, USA (Ret.), Chairman, Institute for the Study of War and Former Vice Chief of Staff of the Army; Ryan Crocker, Dean and Executive Professor, The George Bush School of Government and Public Service, Texas A&M University and Former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan; and Philip Gordon, Senior Fellow, The Council on Foreign Relations and Former Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs. Witnesses’ testimonies are available on the Committee website.