



Greetings from the Project on Middle East Democracy!

Last week saw a number of Middle East-related bills introduced in Congress, including three bills pushing for the continued reconstruction of Iraq to be paid for by the Iraqi government. Former President Jimmy Carter sparked intense debate on his Middle East trip by meeting with several leaders of Hamas, with three bills proposed in reaction to this move as well. Meanwhile, the legal deadline of April 15 came and went without the House and Senate agreeing on a budget resolution, with House leaders declaring their intention to move forward with the appropriations process, with or without a budget bill. In the region, the Egyptian government's crackdown on dissent and opposition continued with the sentencing of key Muslim Brotherhood members to long prison terms. This week debate in Washington will continue to focus on Iraq with the markup of Senate legislation on Iraqi reconstruction.

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 POMED's blog, [the POMED Wire](#).

## The Weekly Wire

April 21, 2008

### *Legislation*

On Tuesday (4/15), **Rep. Christopher Shays** (R-CT) introduced [H.RES.1108](#), expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that future Iraq reconstruction should be paid for by the Government of Iraq.

On Tuesday (4/15), **Senator Lugar** (R-IN) introduced Senate resolution [S.RES.516](#) solemnly commemorating the 25th anniversary of the tragic April 1983 bombing of the United States Embassy in Beirut and remembering those who lost their lives and those who were injured.

On Tuesday (4/15), **Rep. Bill Shuster** (R-PA) introduced house resolution [H.CON.RES.329](#) expressing the sense of Congress that former Presidents and high-ranking political figures should refrain from freelance diplomacy against the wishes of the current Government and stated United States foreign policy, with specific reference to President Jimmy Carter's current involvement in Palestinian-Israeli peace talks.

On Wednesday (4/16), **Rep. Joe Knollenberg** (R-MI) introduced [H.R.5816](#) to prohibit assistance for the Carter Center located in Atlanta, Georgia.

On Wednesday (4/16), **Rep. Mark Steven Kirk** introduced house resolution [H.RES.1110](#) condemning Hamas as a foreign terrorist organization responsible for the murder of 26 United States citizens.

On Wednesday (4/16), **Rep. Ron Klein** (D-FL) introduced house resolution [H.RES.1111](#) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that any funding provided by the United States to the Government of Iraq for reconstruction, training for Iraqi security forces, and fuel for United States operations in Iraq should be provided in the form of loans.

On Wednesday (4/16), **Rep. Barney Frank** introduced house amendment [H.AMDT.994](#) to resolution [H.R.2634](#) to exclude any country whose government has business interests with Iran.

On Thursday (4/17), **Rep Dana Rohrabacher** (R-CA) introduced resolution [H.RES.1123](#) calling on the President of the United States not to commit the United States to any status of forces agreement or any other bilateral agreement with the Republic of Iraq that involves the continued presence of the United States Armed Forces in Iraq unless the agreement includes a provision under which the Republic of Iraq agrees to reimburse the United States for all costs incurred by the United States related to the presence of United States Armed Forces in Iraq after the effective date of the agreement.

On Thursday (4/17), **Sen. Harry Reid** (D-NV) introduced [S.RES.522](#), a resolution recognizing the 60th anniversary of the founding of the modern State of Israel and reaffirming the bonds of close friendship and cooperation between the United States and Israel.

## *Committee Hearings*

On Tuesday (4/15) morning the full **House Armed Services Committee** heard testimony on [Building Partnership Capacity and Development of the Interagency Process](#). Witnesses included Defense Secretary, [The Honorable Robert M. Gates](#), Secretary of State [Condoleezza Rice](#) and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman **Admiral Michael G. Mullen**. Committee Chairman, [Rep. Ike Skelton](#) presided. [Click here](#) for POMED's notes on the hearing.

On Thursday (4/17) the **House Foreign Affairs Committee** held a joint hearing with the subcommittees for **Middle East and South Asia** and **Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Trade** entitled, "[Between Feckless and Reckless: U.S. Policy](#)

[Options to Prevent a Nuclear Iran](#)." included testimony from the **Honorable Gary L. Ackerman**, the **Honorable Brad Sherman**, [The Honorable Jeffrey Feltman](#), and [Mr. Daniel Glaser](#), Deputy Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing and Financial Crimes. Click [here](#) to view video of the hearing.

## *In Washington*

**Iraq, Coming Elections, and U.S. Presence:** Many argued that the [U.S. should maintain steady force levels in Iraq until 2010](#), citing the [planned Iraqi provincial elections this fall](#) and national parliamentary elections a year later. Others felt that the need for such steps [fails to demonstrate](#) how the presence of U.S. troops helps accomplish these political goals. Some argued for [a more sincere examination](#) of the possible scenarios likely to emerge in Iraq following a drawdown in U.S. troops.

**Turkish Courts, AKP, Kurds, and U.S. Policy:** Following the decision of the Turkish Constitutional Court to hear a case banning the ruling AKP, some [warn](#) that "a high court decision to nullify the popular will by dissolving a legitimately elected party would cast a pall over Turkish democracy." Others [urge Secretary Rice](#) to remain silent on the issue and not push Turkey "over the edge." Meanwhile, one observer [notes](#) that **Prime Minister Erdoğan** has "gained the dubious distinction of launching more lawsuits against journalists and commentators than any previous Turkish prime minister."

In a debate over tensions surrounding the Kurds and the Turkey-Iraq border, arguments were put forth that now is [a ripe opportunity](#) for "direct talks between Ankara and Arbil," with some [urging](#) Iraqi Kurds to recognize the PKK as a terrorist organization and thus "come on board" with the American, Iraqi, and Turkish governments. One commentator [warns](#), "Washington would not look favorably on any Turkish actions in the north that would precipitate further Iranian meddling in Iraq." Another [argues](#) that Turkey's new strategy in regards to the Kurds is "based on three principles: domestic peace, regional legitimacy and coordination with the United States and the European Union."

**Assessing Bush's Foreign Policy in the Region:** In a discussion on [how to better provide support](#) to the international community, many argued that [Iran actually has numerous strategic interests in Iraq](#) in common with the United States, while others [pushed for isolating Iran](#). Many commented on the [changing relationship between the United States and Libya](#) while others [criticized](#) the Bush Administration for [not having a concrete plan](#) on combating terrorism in Pakistan.

**Jimmy Carter Meets with Hamas:** While [visiting](#) the Palestinian territories and neighboring nations, former U.S. President **Jimmy Carter** [met with Hamas official](#) and former Deputy Prime Minister in the [Hamas-led](#) government in Ramallah. Many were quick to [attack](#) Carter, [arguing](#) that it [sends the wrong message](#) by legitimizing Hamas and [condemned](#) him for undermining a current policy that is not American. Others [defended Carter's actions](#), and even [praised](#) him for his efforts at engagement.

*Also Worth Reading*

The Institute for Public Policy Research has released a new [in-depth report](#) by Syracuse **Professor Joshua Stacher** examining the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. The paper includes an overview and history of the organization; the group's policy positions on issues including the rights of women and minorities, political reform, and the application on Shari'a law; its performance in parliament since winning 88 seats in the 2005 parliamentary elections; and an analysis of western policies toward the organization.

## *In the Middle East*

**Iraq, Coming Elections, and U.S. Presence:** Many argued that the [U.S. should maintain steady force levels in Iraq until 2010](#), citing the [planned Iraqi provincial elections this fall](#) and national parliamentary elections a year later. Others felt that the need for such steps [fails to demonstrate](#) how the presence of U.S. troops helps accomplish these political goals. Some argued for [a more sincere examination](#) of the possible scenarios likely to emerge in Iraq following a drawdown in U.S. troops.

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