



Greetings from the Project on Middle East Democracy!

Last week the Congress was away on its Memorial Day recess (as was our Weekly Wire), but before adjourning, the House passed the Iraq supplemental appropriations bill and the Defense Authorization bill, and the budget conference committee reached agreement on the Fiscal Year 2008 budget resolution. In the Middle East, the conflict that erupted in Lebanon abated at least for the time being, with a political agreement bringing to an end the 18-month political stalemate and ending the Presidential vacuum that had persisted since November with the election of General Michel Suleiman. In Egypt, the two-year extension of the state of emergency rule was widely criticized. As the Senate returns to session today and the House tomorrow, focus this week will be on the supplemental appropriations bill and the budget resolution. For more information on the budget and appropriations process, see POMED's [new report](#) on the FY 2009 budget.

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

June 3, 2008

## *Legislation*

On Tuesday (5/20), **Rep Alcee L. Hastings** (D-FL) introduced resolution [H.Res.1213](#), providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 5658) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2009 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 2009, and for other purposes. The resolution was passed/agreed to in the House by voice vote on 5/21.

On Tuesday (5/20), the conference report [110-659](#) was filed by the conference committee convened to reconcile the House and Senate versions of [S.Con.Res.70](#),

the **Fiscal Year 2009 Budget Resolution**. The resolution was expected to be passed before adjourning for recess, but was delayed because of an error in the farm bill, which is tied to the most recent budget resolution. The conference version, which is now expected to be passed late this week, allocates \$38.3 billion for international affairs, \$1.5 billion less than the President's request.

On Wednesday (5/21), a Senate bill [S.2829](#), originally introduced by **Sen Edward Kennedy** (D-MA) on 4/8/2008 was cleared for the White House. The bill makes technical corrections to section 1244 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008, which provides special immigrant status for certain Iraqis, particularly those who have endangered themselves by cooperating with U.S. forces.

On Wednesday (5/21), [H.Con.Res.32](#), originally introduced by **Rep Jeff Miller** (R-FL), was received in the Senate and House Armed Services Committees. The resolution honors members of the United States Air Force who were killed in the June 25, 1996, terrorist bombing of the Khobar Towers United States military housing compound near Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

On Thursday (5/22), the House passed resolution [H.Res.1194](#) by a [401-10](#) vote, reaffirming the support of the House of Representatives for the legitimate, democratically-elected Government of Lebanon under Prime Minister Fouad Siniora. The legislation was originally introduced by **Rep Howard L. Berman** (D-CA) on 5/14/2008.

On Thursday (5/22), the House passed [H.R.5658](#), the **National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009**, in a [384-23](#) vote. The bill contains clauses that aim to restrict the President's ability to reach long-term agreements with the government of Iraq regarding the U.S. military presence, as well as a number of amendments relevant for Middle East policy, a few of which are described below.

On Thursday (5/22) the House agreed on **H.AMDT.1047** to [H.R.5658](#) by voice vote. The amendment, as introduced by [Rep Ike Skelton](#) (D-MO), requires the Defense Secretary, Secretary of State, and USAID Administrator to establish a standing advisory panel to improve integration on matters of national security.

On Thursday (5/22) the House agreed on **H.AMDT.1068** to [H.R.5658](#) by voice vote. Introduced by **Rep John M. Spratt** (D-SC), the amendment would require the Director of National Intelligence, on an annual basis, to submit to Congress an update of the National Intelligence Estimate entitled "Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities." Such an update could be submitted in classified form. The President shall notify Congress in writing within 15 days of determining that Iran has met or surpassed any major milestone in its nuclear weapons program or that Iran has undertaken to accelerate, decelerate, or cease the development of any significant element within its nuclear weapons program.

A [summary](#) of the full defense authorization act is available at the website of the House Armed Services Committee.

## *Committee Hearings*

On Tuesday (5/20), the **Senate Foreign Relations Committee** held a hearing entitled "Pakistan's FATA Challenge: Securing One of the World's Most Dangerous Areas," with **Senator John Kerry** presiding. Witnesses included [The Honorable John D. Negroponte](#), Deputy Secretary of State and [Mr. Gene Dodaro](#), Acting Comptroller General of the Government Accountability Office.

On Wednesday (5/21), the **House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia** held a hearing and was presided by subcommittee Chair [Gary L. Ackerman](#) (D-NY). Entitled "The U.S.-Israel-Egypt Trilateral Relationship: Shoring Up the Foundation of Regional Peace," the committee heard testimony from [The Honorable Daniel C. Kurtzer](#), Lecturer and S. Daniel Abraham Professor of Middle Eastern Policy Studies at Princeton University, and [Mr. David Makovsky](#), Senior Fellow and Director Project on the Middle East Peace Process at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

On Thursday (5/22), the **Senate Armed Service Committee** hearing to consider the nominations of: [General David H. Petraeus](#) for reappointment to the grade of general and to be Commander, United States Central Command, and [Lieutenant General Raymond T. Odierno](#), for appointment to the grade of general and to be Commander, Multi-National Force - Iraq.

On Thursday (5/22), the **House Foreign Affairs Full Committee** held a hearing to discuss "Rising Oil Prices, Declining National Security?" Representatives heard testimony by [The Honorable David Sandalow](#), Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution and Former Assistant Secretary of State, [Ms. Anne Korin](#), Co-director of the Institute for the Analysis of Global Security. And [Mr. Paul J. Saunders](#), Executive Director at The Nixon Center. [The Honorable Howard L. Berman](#) presided.

Also on Thursday (5/22), the **House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight**, presided by Bill Delahunt (D-MA), Chair "City on the Hill or Just Another Country? The United States and the Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy." Witnesses included [The Honorable John Shattuck](#), Chief Executive Officer at the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation and former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor and former U.S. Ambassador to the Czech Republic, and [Kenneth Roth, Esq.](#), Executive Director of Human Rights Watch.

## *In Washington*

**Talk to Enemies or Isolate Them?** Following the public acknowledgment of discourse between [Syria and Israel](#), some political heavyweights and analysts [weighed in](#) on the [wisdom](#) of Bush's policy [not to engage in dialogue](#) with enemies. Senator Joe Lieberman [questioned the wisdom](#) of such negotiations, while [Senator Joe Biden](#) and [General Petraeus](#) signaled their preference for dialogue with Iran, as did [Zbigniew Brzezinski and Lieutenant General \(ret'd\) William Odom](#). James Baker recalled the 2006 Palestinian elections and [flatly denounced](#) the administration's refusal to recognize Hamas. The debate carried over to the [campaign trail](#), as [many discussed](#) Barack Obama's pledge to meet with leaders of inimical regimes.

**Rethinking Approaches to U.S. Policy:** A [policy brief](#) argued for "a strategic

shift in U.S. perceptions and strategy" toward Pakistan, broadening the approach from one based primarily on the war on terrorism. Others [call for](#) the use of a robust multinational coalition such as NATO to help stabilize the Middle East, or to acknowledge the limits of unilateral efforts to promote democracy and instead work [within the framework of the United Nations](#) to support democracy and human rights.

### *Also Worth Reading*

**Thomas Carothers** [considers](#) for the *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* whether a League of Democracies will work, arguing that it "rests on a false assumption that democracies share sufficient common interests to work effectively together on a wide range of global issues." Instead, Carothers recommends partnerships for individual issues, a clear rebuke of military interventions to supplant sovereigns with democracies, a reversal of policies that abuse human rights, efforts to encourage autocrats and "autocratic allies such as Pakistan and Egypt" to reform politically, and a stronger commitment to existing multilateral institutions "such as the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe."

### *In the Middle East*

**Aftermath of Political Settlement in Lebanon:** Recent developments in Lebanon have incited a fury of [debate](#). After Hezbollah seized control of much of the capital, the power-sharing [Doha Agreement](#) was reached between the Siniora government and the Hezbollah-led opposition. The election of President Michel Suleiman and [promise of restraint by Nasrallah](#) are widely seen as tentative steps forward in reconciling the country. But some, however, view the compromise as [anti-democratic backsliding](#). While the long-term effects are uncertain, some predict the Doha Agreement will cause a [new alignment](#) of the political parties and others [theorize](#) the beginning of Hezbollah's political downfall. Regarding its implications for US policy, some saw a demonstration of the lack of [U.S. leverage](#) in the [region](#) and the [twilight](#) of the Bush administration. For a good synopsis of the response of the Middle Eastern media to the Doha agreement, read this [BBC report](#).

**A Look at Iran:** [Iran's nuclear activity](#) continues to pique interests, particularly after the recent [IAEA report](#) that Iran is not cooperating fully and has refused to suspend its uranium enrichment program. Some see this as an example of [Tehran's erratic foreign and domestic policy](#) that has allowed them to deflect internal and external pressures. However, [recent developments](#) in the Iranian Parliament, including the election of former nuclear negotiator [Ali Larijani](#) as Parliament Speaker, may pose a challenge to Ahmadinejad domestically.

**Effects of Blogging and Online Networking in Arab World:** Last week discussion continued around [the emerging role](#) of blogging and social networking websites on Arab politics, particularly in Egypt. Some [highlighted the diversity](#) among Arab blogs, and [noted](#) the "desire to take on both the regime and the old guard of their movement compels young Muslim Brotherhood members in Egypt - men and women - to blog." Others focused on [social networking sites](#) like Facebook, seen as "political weapons." However, it was noted that such movements

come with a price, as many online activists have been [detained and beaten](#) by government security forces. Others are [a bit less enthusiastic](#) about the force of online activity while unaccompanied by heavy on-the-ground political efforts, [cautioning](#) that although internet participation is "becoming more powerful," it is "no automatic revolution."

**Rising Food Prices and Economic Challenges:** Many reacted last week to the consequences of rising food prices and [economic pressures](#) across the region. The food crisis was widely [seen as creating](#) "an opening for Muslim fundamentalists" in countries including Egypt and Jordan. The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan is cited as [providing food assistance](#) with the requirement that recipients must "attend classes advocating the imposition of Sharia law." More broadly, high unemployment and poverty levels are seen as exacerbating the effects of increasing inflationary pressures, all of which result in [increased discontent](#) with the government. Others focused on the opportunities and challenges posed by the enormous "[youth bulge](#)" in the region.

**Emergency Rule Extended in Egypt:** The state of [emergency rule](#) enacted 27 years ago by the Egyptian Parliament under **President Hosni Mubarak** was renewed last week for an additional two years. The law allows police to arrest anyone without charges and to quash public demonstrations, such as April's organized protest in response to low wages and [rising food prices](#). The rise of strikes and demonstrations were [attributed](#) to "the acute decline in socio-economic conditions" described above. Some [consider](#) the extension of emergency rule as a direct means to suppress these along with other "opposition" movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood. A U.S. State Department spokesman described the extension of emergency law as "[disappointing](#)."

**Looking Forwards and Backwards in Iraq:** The coming October provincial elections have sparked [concerns](#) over the sectarianism that continues to pervade Iraqi politics. Some worry that precluding [Sadrists](#) from participating in the provincial elections may push them in more extreme directions. Meanwhile, [fears persist](#) that tensions between the Kurdistan Alliance and the United Iraqi Alliance over Kirkuk could spark further Arab-Kurdish tensions in the north. And others [reflect](#) on the administration's changing rhetoric for the Iraq war from WMDs to preventing terrorism to spreading democracy.

**Internal Dissent in Jihadist Circles?** Discussion was sparked last week by [claims](#) that key figures in Jihadist movements are [turning away from al Qaeda](#). Some disputed the significance of so-called key Jihadist critics like [Sayyid Imam al Sharif](#), arguing that such critics [lack influence](#) and are "jihadi-has-beens, men with personal grudges against bin Laden and/or al Zawahiri, or men who are saying what the Egyptian and Saudi governments tell them to say in order to get a bit less horrendous treatment in the prisons in which they are incarcerated." Others agree with the signs of internal disintegration of Al Qaeda, but [dispute](#) whether the primary cause is U.S. military pressure and [a series of defeats](#) suffered by jihadists.

*Also Worth Reading*

If you haven't already seen it, check out the new two-part paper by POMED's Director of Dialogue Programs David DeBartolo, "[Perceptions of U.S. Democracy Promotion](#)." In particular, "Part One: Middle Eastern Views" examines a variety of

public opinion polling data from the region, focusing on the perceptions of democracy and views of U.S. efforts to promote democracy abroad. He draws on the data to make a series of conclusions and recommendations for U.S. policy. In addition, POMED recently held a panel discussion on this topic, including several polling experts from the Arab world. [Click here](#) for more details on the event, including the slides from the PowerPoint presentations on polling data.