



Dear Friend,

Greetings from the Project on Middle East Democracy!

President Bush spent last week visiting the Middle East, and his trip was dominated by two speeches – one in Egypt stressing the need for democratic reform in the region, and another before the Israeli Knesset commemorating Israel's 60th anniversary, where he also made waves by recalling Neville Chamberlain in describing negotiating with "terrorists and radicals" as "appeasement." Each speech stirred up reactions and debate here in Washington. Over the weekend, Kuwaitis went to the polls to elect a parliament to replace the body dismissed by the emir in March – despite significant changes to the electoral law, the newly elected parliament very much resembles the outgoing one. In Washington, Congress was quite busy, acting on more than a dozen bills with ramifications for Middle East policy, including various versions of the FY09 defense authorization bill. This week, it appears that House and Senate conferees may reach agreement on a budget resolution, clearing the way for the appropriations committees to allocate funds for FY09. And observers will continue to keep a close eye on tensions in Lebanon.

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

May 19, 2008

Legislation

On Monday (5/12), **Sen Carl Levin** (D-MI) introduced [S.3001](#) and [S.3002](#), two versions of the Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, which authorizes appropriations for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes. The bill has been placed on Senate Legislative Calendar under General Orders. Calendar No. 732.

On Monday (5/12,) **Sen Thomas R. Caper** (D-DE) introduced Senate bill [S.3006](#) to establish procedures for the expedited consideration by Congress of certain proposals by

the President to rescind amounts of budget authority. It has been referred to Senate committee.

On Tuesday (5/13), **Rep Bill Shuster** (R-PA) introduced resolution [H.RES.1187](#) promoting global energy supply security through increased cooperation among the United States, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, by diversifying sources of energy, and implementing certain oil and natural gas pipeline projects for the safe and secure transportation of Eurasian hydrocarbon resources to world markets.

On Tuesday (5/13), **Rep James P. McGovern** (D-MA) introduced resolution [H.RES.1190](#) providing for the adoption of the concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 70) setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2009 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2008 and 2010 through 2013. It was passed/agreed to in House on Wednesday (5/14).

On Tuesday (5/13), **Sen Charles Schumer** (D-NY) introduced joint resolution [S.J.RES.32](#) limiting the issuance of a letter of offer with respect to a certain proposed sale of defense articles and defense services to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It has been placed on Senate Legislative Calendar under General Orders. Calendar No. 736.

On Wednesday (5/14), **Rep Betty Sutton** (D-OH) introduced resolution [H.RES.1200](#) honoring the dedication and outstanding work of military support groups across the country for their steadfast support of the members of our Armed Forces and their families.

On Wednesday (5/14), **Rep John Shadegg** (R-AZ) introduced resolution [H.CON.RES.349](#) honoring past and current members of the Armed Forces of the United States and their families by encouraging every American to wear a red poppy on Memorial Day as a sign of admiration and thanks to those individuals who died to preserve freedom and democracy in the United States.

On Wednesday (5/14), [H.CON.RES.312](#) originally introduced on 3/7/2008 by **Rep John Spratt** (D-SC), was passed along with [H. Res. 1190](#), revising the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008, establishing the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2009, and setting forth appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2010 through 2013. For further action see [S.Con.Res. 70](#).

On Thursday (5/15), **Rep Steve Israel** (D-NY) introduced resolution [H.RES.1201](#) expressing the grave concern of the House of Representatives for Hezbollah, Syria, and Iran's continued actions to undermine the legitimate Lebanese Government of Prime Minister Fuad Siniora, and their systematic violation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1559, 1680, 1701, and 1747.

On Thursday (5/15), **Rep Bill Delahunt** (D-MA) introduced [H.RES.1205](#) noting that the Government of Iraq will likely enjoy \$32 billion in surplus oil revenues in 2008 and requesting the Government of Iraq to dedicate \$1 billion to address the needs of Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons.

On Thursday (5/15), resolution [H.R.2642](#) was passed by a vote of 256-166, making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes. It was originally introduced by **Rep Chet Edwards** (D-TX) on 6/11/2007. **Note:** The House

Rules Committee has posted [documents](#) related to [H.Res. 1197](#), which provided for consideration of [H.R. 2642](#) as the Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2008. The [Senate Appropriations Committee](#) has posted markup highlights of the committee's version of a FY2008 War Supplemental bill. In previous action on [H.R. 2642](#), FY2008 appropriations for military construction and veterans affairs were incorporated as Division B in the [H.R. 3043](#) conference report, subsequently removed from that bill, and enacted in [H.R. 2764](#), Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008.

On Thursday (5/15), **Rep Adam Schiff** (D-CA) introduced resolution **H.R.6079** [text not yet available] to direct the Secretary of State to submit a report outlining the steps taken and plans made by the United States to end Turkey's blockade of Armenia, and for other purposes.

On Friday (5/16), [H.R.5658](#) originally introduced by **Rep Ike Skelton** (D-MO) on 3/31/2008, was placed on the Union Calendar, Calendar No. 413, a resolution 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.

Committee Hearings

The Senate Armed Services Committee met on Thursday (5/15) in closed session to consider pending military nominations.

House Armed Service Committee also met in closed session on Wednesday (5/14) to mark up the following legislation: 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.

House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight, held a hearing on Thursday, entitled "U.N. Security Resolution 1325: Recognizing Women's Vital Roles in Achieving Peace and Security." Presided by Chair Bill Delahunt (D-MA), witnesses included [The Honorable Swanee Hunt](#), former U.S. Ambassador to Austria and Chair of the Hunt Alternatives Fund, [The Honorable Donald K. Steinberg](#), Deputy President for Policy at the International Crisis Group, and [Ms. Rina Amiri](#), Senior Regional Advisor of the Central Eurasia Project at the Open Society Institute. Other testimonies were offered by [Ms. Rebecca Joshua Okwaci](#), Secretary General of Women Action for Development, [Ms. Betty Bigombe](#), Distinguished Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, and [Janice Crouse](#), Ph.D. and Senior Fellow at the Beverly LaHaye Institute of Concerned Women for America

In Washington

President Bush's Speech on Democracy in Egypt: President Bush left last week on a six-day visit to the region, making stops in Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. He concluded the visit with a [big speech](#) focused on the need for democracy across the Middle East before the World Economic Forum on the Middle East in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt. In it, **President Bush** declared, "...true democracy requires vigorous political parties allowed to engage in free and lively debate...And true democracy requires

competitive elections in which opposition candidates are allowed to campaign without fear or intimidation." Although Bush's [rhetoric](#) seems to be directed at the entire region, he reserved his most direct criticism for inimical regimes, declaring that the United States "must stand with the good and decent people of Iran and Syria" but failing to make a similar commitment to the people of his host country, Egypt, or other close U.S. autocratic allies.

However, Bush did tell reporters on Saturday that in private meetings with Egyptian **President Hosni Mubarak**, he had expressed concern for the plight of jailed opposition leader **Ayman Nour**. Bush made no specific mention of jailed Egyptian blogger **Abdel Kareem Nabil Soliman** (aka Kareem Amer), the first blogger in the Arab world imprisoned solely for expressing his opinions on his blog. Bush [received a letter](#) on Friday from **Rep. Mark Kirk** (R-IL) and **Rep. Barney Frank** (D-MA) and co-signed by thirteen other members of Congress, urging him to call for Kareem's release.

Meanwhile, observations were made regarding the growing youth [net-roots](#) movement in Egypt, and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood was examined and declared by some to be a [counterweight](#) to jihadist groups like Al-Qaeda both intellectually and politically.

Diplomacy Versus Appeasement in Iran and Elsewhere: It was [reported](#) last Thursday that **Defense Secretary Robert Gates** essentially agrees with the position adopted by some [commentators](#) that the US "should construct a combination of pressure and incentives to engage Iran, and may have missed earlier opportunities to begin a useful dialogue with Tehran." The same day, **President Bush** sparked controversy by [declaring before the Israeli Knesset](#) that "Some seem to believe that we should negotiate with the terrorists and radicals...we have an obligation to call this what it is -- the false comfort of appeasement, which has been repeatedly discredited by history."

Some [criticized](#) the remarks as "[conflation of diplomacy with appeasement](#)," [attacked](#) the remarks as self-righteous, or [questioned](#) the popular notion that negotiations enhance prestige. Others [viewed](#) Bush's statements as "relatively banal...because it has been repeated in some form or another by Western leaders ever since it became indubitably clear that Neville Chamberlain did not quite have things right at Munich." With regard to Iran, some [argued](#) that refusal to engage in talks "provides an unpopular Iranian government with a convenient outside enemy to rally nationalistic support to its side." More broadly, some [contended](#) that Bush's "disdain for diplomacy has alienated friends and emboldened enemies" across the Middle East. Some urged active support of [moderate political groups](#) to produce regime change in Iran, acknowledging that surgical bombing attacks are now a [problematic option](#).

One observer [saw irony](#) in Bush's stance against appeasing "terrorists and radicals," given his meetings with the Saudi royal family last week in which an agreement was reached to provide them with [civilian nuclear technology](#). Bush also [pleaded with the Saudis](#) to increase oil production to help lower U.S. gasoline prices, while some [noted](#) the lack of rights of Saudi women.

Questioning the U.S. Role in Today's Iraq: One blogger [asserts](#) that "we need to step back and think about the U.S. role" and question whether it is establishing a legitimate Iraqi government or "simply [being] caught in the middle of an intra-Shia power struggle, empowering one side (Dawa and ISCI) in its effort to weaken its principal rival (Sadr/JAM) in their ongoing competition for control of southern Iraq and the hearts and minds of the Shia masses in the lead up to provincial elections." An op-ed examines the contribution of [President Nuri Al-Maliki](#) to Iraq's political development.

Additional commentary explores what steps must be taken to rebuild Iraq. They [stress](#) that “restoring social normalcy is imperative” to turning the tide.

U.S. Support for Pakistani Democracy: The deadlock continued within the newly elected [Pakistani government](#) over the reinstatement of judges dismissed by **President Pervez Musharraf** last year. The people of Pakistan question the role of Washington in their internal politics. Reuters [reports](#) that the “growing sense of disillusion hasn’t been helped by the United States energetic diplomacy,” considered by many to be “engineering Pakistan’s future by propping up Musharraf.” An [editorial](#) declared that “the United States must make clear, finally, that its goal is not to keep Musharraf in office but to help the civilian government survive and prosper.” A local Pakistani paper also [weighed in](#) on the U.S. in supporting Pakistani democracy.

Turkey, the AKP, PKK, and U.S. Interests: As the controversy continues surrounding the Turkish Constitutional Court’s effort to ban the ruling AKP, some observers [insist](#) that “Turkey is vital to our national and international security interests,” and suggest that when the courts agreed to hear a case to ban ruling AK Party , it “set in motion a dangerous chain of events that could undo years of political and economic progress in Turkey.” Another analysis [focuses on](#) the constitutional amendments passed by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s AK Party, while a new policy brief explores the [Turkish business climate](#) “in the face of political, social, and economic trends in the country.” **Elsewhere**, debate continues over whether the U.S. should “take steps to address [Turkish concerns about the PKK](#), and thus make future interventions less necessary?”

Also Worth Reading

Be sure to check out Freedom House’s new report, “[Meeting our Commitment to Democracy and Human Rights](#),” which examines the Fiscal Year 2008 Foreign Operations appropriations passed by Congress in December 2007 as they relate to support for democracy and human rights abroad. The report notes that Congress appropriated a total of \$153.0 million in democracy and governance funding for the Near East in FY08, a decrease from the \$179.4 million appropriated for FY07. Although the Middle East is widely considered the focus of the Bush administration’s democracy promotion efforts, it received a smaller allocation for democracy and governance programs than four other regional groups. The report also makes note of the \$5 million decrease in funding appropriated for democracy programs in Egypt.

See also POMED’s brief [December 2007 report](#) on the FY08 appropriations for State and Foreign Operations, and keep an eye out for POMED’s forthcoming report on the President’s FY09 budget request.

In the Middle East

Parliamentary Elections in Kuwait: On Saturday, Kuwaitis [voted to elected a parliament](#) to replace the parliament dissolved by the emir, **Shiekh Sabah al-Ahmed al-Sabah**, in March. The emir dismissed the parliament in response to what he viewed as obstruction of his proposed economic modernization reforms by members of parliament [focused on local issues and pushing an Islamist agenda](#). But Islamists [were reported](#) to have [won 24 of 50 seats](#) on Saturday, two more seats than they held previously. Other reports focused on [the failure](#) of any of the 27 women candidates to win a seat, and noted that 28 of the 50 existing members of parliament were re-elected. Pre-election analyses included examinations of [the new electoral system](#), specific [female](#)

[candidates](#) and their chances for winning, and a [breakdown](#) of the various parties, voting blocs, coalitions and tribal alliances likely to play a role in the elections.

“Tribal Spirit” Blamed for Regional Woes: Last week several commentators [argued](#) that the fragmentation seen in Lebanon is a manifestation of the Arab “tribal spirit.” Similar reasons were given for skepticism toward the prospects of peace more generally in the region, as it was [argued](#) that Middle East peace is “not going to happen” because Arabs are “hard-wired for conflict.” Others were somewhat less pessimistic, while still viewing Arab “tribalism” as a [cultural root cause of conflict](#) and a significant impediment to change.

Lebanon: Some see Hezbollah’s efforts in the recent [fighting](#) in Lebanon as having [empowered Iran](#). Some commentators rejected President Bush’s idea of giving more aid to the Lebanese Army and instead [recommend diplomacy](#) with Syria and Iran. And an editorial wishes Hezbollah would use its arms as a bargaining chip in wide-ranging [negotiations](#), which is argued to be Hezbollah’s only politically profitable option.

Correction: Astute readers pointed out an error in last week’s *Wire*, in the sentence: “Some warned that Iran was being duplicitous in its public statements and behind-the-scenes actions, while others stressed the need for [diplomacy and political compromise](#) to defuse tensions.” The link was to a Washington Post op-ed that argued essentially the opposite of the point noted. The link should have instead been to this Asia Times piece: http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/JE14Ak01.html