

Heard on the Hill

Lantos condemns PLO praise of terror mastermind. Rep. TOM LANTOS (D-CA) denounced the PLO's representative in Washington, Afif Safieh, for calling the late terrorist George Habash "a great leader." The House Foreign Affairs Committee chairman said he was "astonished that the PLO's representative to this country would make such an asinine comment and would actually have the temerity to call on Americans to come to his office and sign a 'register of condolences' for this vicious individual. How disgusting." Habash, who died Jan. 26, was the founder of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and was the mastermind of airliner hijackings in the 1970s.

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U.S. acts to keep spare F-14 parts from Iran. President Bush signed into law a major military spending bill that includes provisions prohibiting the Pentagon from selling spare F-14 fighter jet parts, a move intended to prevent them from falling into the hands of rogue states such as Iran. The initiative to enact a ban came in the wake of media reports indicating that Iran, China and other countries were exploiting weaknesses in Pentagon surplus-sale security to obtain the sensitive parts. The provisions were spearheaded in the House by Reps. GABRIELLE GIFFORDS (D-AZ) and STEVE PEARCE (R-NM) and in the Senate by Sen. RON WYDEN (D-OR).

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Ackerman condemns Arab anti-Semitism. A senior House leader harshly denounced the Arab world for its anti-Israel and anti-American incitement. "Quite simply, the continuous propagation by some Arab governments of insidious, incendiary and poisonous speech regarding Israel and the Jewish people makes our efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict all the more difficult," said House Foreign Affairs Middle East Subcommittee Chairman GARY ACKERMAN (D-NY) during a hearing of his subcommittee. •NER•

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NEAR EAST

Report

FEBRUARY 1-15, 2008

**AIPAC'S BIWEEKLY ON AMERICAN
MIDDLE EAST POLICY**

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Hamas' Theatrics

Hamas' war against the Jewish state has taken a dangerous turn. By breaching the border wall between Gaza and Egypt, Hamas terrorists have been able to cross into the Sinai Peninsula and threaten Israel along the entire Egypt-Israel border. Yet Israel has responded to Hamas' provocations with remarkable restraint. Prime Minister Olmert promised Palestinian President Abbas that Israel would allow supplies into Gaza and prevent a "humanitarian disaster" there. However, if Hamas' attacks against Israeli civilians continue, a chance remains that Israel will be forced to take more serious action in Gaza.

How dangerous is the Hamas threat? More than 120 Qassam rockets struck southern Israel in a three-day period in mid-January—and more than 400 rockets and mortar shells were fired during the month. In addition, Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist organizations have been smuggling longer-range Katyusha rockets, thus placing 250,000 Israelis living in southern cities such as Ashkelon directly in the line of fire.

With the Gaza-Egypt border wide
...see *Editor's Comments cont'd on pg. 4*

Critical Aid

**PRESIDENT BUSH SIGNS BILL
GRANTING \$2.42 BILLION TO ISRAEL**

President Bush has signed a bill that allocates \$2.42 billion in U.S. aid to Israel, including \$2.38 billion in military aid and \$39.6 million in assistance for the resettlement of refugees from the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and Ethiopia. The House and Senate approved the funding in December as part of a comprehensive federal funding package.

The aid package represents the final year of a 10-year plan between the United States and Israel to phase out economic aid to Israel while gradually increasing the amount of military aid. The two allies recently signed a new 10-year agreement

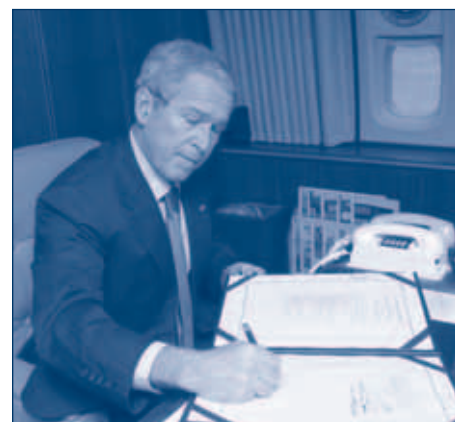


Photo by the Associated Press

While on Air Force One, President Bush signed a bill allocating \$2.42 billion in aid to Israel.

that pledges U.S. support for \$30 billion in security assistance to Israel over the next ten years, which will allow the Jewish state to meet new and growing strategic threats.

The bill also includes restrictions on aid to the Palestinian Authority (PA), prohibiting U.S. funds from being used to pay the salaries of Palestinians in the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip. It further bars the PA from using any of the funds if Hamas and Fatah reconcile—unless Hamas recognizes Israel, renounces terrorism and accepts previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements. Furthermore, the president could not provide funding to the PA unless he reported on specific steps the PA has taken to dismantle the Palestinian terrorist infrastructure.

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NER INTERVIEWS

SONER CAGAPTAY, LEADING EXPERT ON TURKEY

Soner Cagaptay is a senior fellow and director of the Turkish Research Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.



Photo courtesy of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy

Cagaptay says that the United States and Israel are working with Turkey to help fight the PKK.

NER: What's the PKK?

Soner Cagaptay: The PKK—the Kurdish acronym for Kurdistan Workers Party—is a terrorist organization. It was founded in the 1970s and has mounted attacks on Turkey ever since, killing thousands of Turkish civilians and soldiers. It is designated as a terrorist organization by the United States, NATO, the European Union and Turkey. It was originally established as a communist front for the Soviets in order to destabilize Turkey, a key U.S. NATO ally bordering on the Soviet Union.

NER: Have Syria and Iran supported the PKK?

SC: Yes. In the 1970s, Syria provided training for PKK terrorists. After the 1979 revolution, Iran's Islamic government regarded neighboring Turkey—a secular democracy—as a potential antidote to its own theocratic regime. Tehran, therefore, acted to destabilize Turkey, joining Syria in the 1980s in backing the PKK.

NER: Does the PKK still attack Turkey from Iran and Syria?

SC: No. Syria expelled PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan in 1998 after Turkey

massed troops on the Syrian border and threatened war, and Iran turned against the PKK after the Iraq war in 2003. Finding itself surrounded by U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, Tehran decided to break that grip by making friends with Turkey. Almost overnight, Iran went from supporting the PKK to combating the group in an effort to win the Turks' heart.

NER: When did the PKK start attacking Turkey from Iraqi territory?

SC: During the 1980s, the PKK attacked Turkey from Iran and Syria. After Operation Desert Storm in 1991, the U.S. created a safe haven for the Kurds in northern Iraq, in effect removing the region from Iraqi control. The PKK then established bases in the area and attacked Turkey across the border.

NER: How does the PKK issue affect Turkey's foreign policy?

SC: The Turks index countries mainly through the PKK issue. Whoever helps Turkey against the PKK is a friend; those supporting the PKK are enemies. In the 1980s the Soviet Union, and in the 1980s and 1990s Syria and Iran, supported the PKK and were considered enemies. The U.S.—which in the 1990s helped Turkey fight the PKK—was a friend. Israel provided Turkey with crucial intelligence, which boosted the Israeli-Turkish partnership in the 1990s. The trilateral relationship was cemented in 1999, when Turkish agents captured Ocalan in Kenya with the help of U.S. intelligence, and reportedly also with Israeli help.

But the situation soon changed. While Syria and Iran continued to act against the PKK, the U.S.—after occupying Iraq in 2003—turned a blind eye to the PKK's use of bases in northern Iraq to attack Turkey. The U.S. thus drew Turkish hostility.

NER: Haven't U.S.-Turkish relations improved recently?

SC: Yes. Since last November, we've seen significant U.S.-Turkish cooperation against the PKK. The U.S. has opened Iraqi airspace for Turkish aircraft and started

providing Turkey with actionable intelligence on PKK targets in northern Iraq. The Turks are using this intelligence to perform pinpoint strategic strikes on PKK bases there. So for the first time since 2003 there's action against PKK presence in northern Iraq and the PKK is hurting. The Turks are now once again beginning to regard the U.S. as a friend.

Furthermore, the U.S. action on the PKK issue has deprived Syria and Iran of a wedge issue, hopefully preventing Turkey's slide towards Damascus and Tehran. This

THERE IS NO DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION TO TERRORISM. THE PKK MUST BE DEFEATED.

is the most important positive step the U.S. has taken vis-à-vis Turkey since Ocalan's capture in 1999.

NER: Is Israel helping the Turks combat the PKK?

SC: Yes. Turkey is using Israeli-made Heron UAVs [unmanned aerial vehicles] for providing intelligence on the PKK. So the picture now is evolving toward a return to that of the 1990s, when Turkey, America and Israel worked together against the PKK.

NER: Some say that the only solution to the PKK problem is diplomatic. What's your opinion?

SC: There is no diplomatic solution to terrorism. The PKK must be defeated. In 1987 to 1999, massive Turkish military operations against the PKK in northern Iraq, followed by Ocalan's capture, led to a five-year halt in PKK terrorism—until the Iraq war created new opportunities for the PKK in northern Iraq. Since then the PKK has rebuilt, rearmed and retrained in the area to an extent unseen since the 1990s. This is Turkey's—and America's—second round against the PKK. In the first round there was victory because Turkey performed cross-border operations and Ocalan was caught. In the second round, which has just begun, we'll see what Turkey and the U.S. can do together. •NER•

Presidential Visit

ON LANDMARK VISIT TO ISRAEL, PRESIDENT BUSH REAFFIRMS DECADES-LONG U.S. SUPPORT FOR THE JEWISH STATE AND EMPHASIZES THE MUTUAL THREAT FROM IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM

During his landmark visit to Israel this month, President Bush reaffirmed his steadfast commitment to a strong U.S.-Israel relationship and the security of the Jewish state. Embarking on a week-long trip that included a swing through several Arab capitals, the president warned of the grave dangers posed by Iran and its pursuit of nuclear weapons, and sought to build on the progress made between Israel and the Palestinians at the Annapolis conference in November.

President Bush arrived in Israel on January 9, the first leg of a historic visit to the Middle East, and his first trip to the Jewish state since taking office. Flanked by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and President Shimon Peres as he stepped off Air Force One at Ben-Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv, the president lauded the historically close ties between Israel and the United States. "The United States and Israel are strong allies," President Bush said, "and the alliance between our two nations helps guarantee Israel's security as a Jewish state."

Iran a Threat to Peace

The president spent his first day in Jerusalem, where he discussed a variety of regional issues with Olmert and Peres, most notably Iran's pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability.

"I said then that Iran was a threat, Iran is a threat, and Iran will be a threat if the international community does not come together and prevent that nation from the development of the know-how to build a nuclear weapon," Bush told reporters following nearly three hours of talks with the prime minister. "A country which has made statements that it's made about the security of our friend, Israel, is a country that needs to be taken seriously. And the international community must understand with clarity the threat that Iran provides to world peace."

Palestinians Must Fight Terrorism

Turning to the ongoing negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA), the president reiterated his vision of two states living side-by-side in peace and

Following a series of meetings in Ramallah with Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad, the president returned to Jerusalem for a final round of talks with Olmert. In a speech outlining a set of general guidelines for an agreement between the parties, Bush acknowledged that "any agreement is subject to implementation of the road map," and demanded from the Palestinian side that it fulfill its obligations by "confronting terrorists and dismantling terrorist infrastructure."

"No agreement and no Palestinian state will be born of terror," President Bush declared. "I reaffirm America's steadfast commitment to Israel's security."

Arab States Must Show Commitment to Peace

President Bush departed Israel for a tour of several Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, where he sought to reassure regional allies of the United States' staunch commitment to preventing the Iranian regime from acquiring nuclear weapons. The president also pressed his Arab counterparts to play a constructive role in the Israeli-Palestinian diplomatic process by providing both diplomatic and economic support to the Palestinian Authority led by Abbas and Fayyad, while continuing to isolate the terrorist group Hamas and beginning to normalize relations with Jerusalem.

"Arab leaders have an obligation to recognize Israel's important contribution to peace and stability in the Middle East," the president said earlier in Jerusalem, "and to encourage and support the Palestinians as they make tough choices."

Bush will return to the Middle East in May to celebrate Israel's 60th anniversary, and to further demonstrate the U.S. commitment to the Jewish state as it seeks peace with its neighbors. •NER•

TERROR-FREE PALESTINIAN STATE

Bush recognized the threat Israel faces from Gaza: **"You can't expect the Israelis—and I certainly don't—to accept a state on their border which would become a launching pad for terrorist activities."**



ARAB WORLD RESPONSIBILITIES

The president called on the Arab world to support Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts: **"Arab leaders have an obligation to recognize Israel's important contribution to peace and stability in the Middle East."**



PRINCIPLES FOR PEACE

On his tour of the Middle East, President Bush reaffirmed important U.S. policies



STRONG U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

Standing next to Prime Minister Olmert, Bush stressed that **"The United States and Israel are strong allies, and the alliance between our two nations helps guarantee Israel's security as a Jewish state."**



THREAT OF NUCLEAR IRAN

Bush highlighted the danger of Iran's nuclear program: **"A country which has made statements that it's made about the security of our friend, Israel, is a country that needs to be taken seriously."**

security. The nearly two-dozen rockets and mortars fired at Israel on the day he arrived, however, served as a chilling reminder of the risks of pursuing that vision. "You can't expect the Israelis—and I certainly don't—to accept a state on their border which would become a launching pad for terrorist activities," he said, adding that he would share that message with PA President Mahmoud Abbas during their meeting the following day.

open, Palestinian terrorist groups have reportedly exploited the wild, unsupervised mass movement of people in order to ship heavy weapons by the truckload. This Hamas military threat from Gaza poses grave dangers to Israel and to the prospects for peace.

Since Hamas broke into Egypt, the terrorist group has manipulated international media and diverted the world's attention from its unprovoked rocket attacks on Israel to Palestinian suffering. When Israel instituted economic sanctions on Gaza in response to the recent barrages of rockets, Hamas made sure that those sanctions affected Palestinian civilians rather than its own infrastructure. To demonstrate that disruptions in power supply force Palestinians to endure darkness, Hamas staged a candlelight session of its Gaza parliamentarians—with curtains drawn in the middle of the day. As usual, Hamas chose cynical theatrics over its peoples' welfare.

Hamas also tried to present the surge of Palestinians into Egypt as evidence of Palestinian "starvation" under Israel's sanctions, although, as *The Washington Post* pointed out, "no one is starving in Gaza."

The world should not be fooled by Hamas' attempt to pin blame on Israel. The responsibility for the minimal economic sanctions that Israel continues to implement lies with Hamas, which fully controls Gaza and could stop the rocket attacks—and thus the sanctions—at any time. •NER•

Educating for Activism

WITH THE SPRING SEMESTER UNDERWAY, AIPAC-TRAINED STUDENTS ARE INFUSING THEIR CAMPUSES WITH NEW PRO-ISRAEL ENERGY AND EXPERIENCE

AIPAC's most accomplished campus activists participated in this year's Advanced Advocacy Student Leadership Mission to Israel during the last two weeks of December and—immediately upon their return to the United States on New Year's Eve—joined 300 fellow pro-Israel campus activists for the Schusterman Advocacy Institute Winter Saban Political Leadership Training Seminar in Washington, D.C. The theme of this year's Winter Saban was "Election and Alliance," and included presentations by Israeli Ambassador to the United States Sallai Meridor, CNN political analyst Paul Begala and former Chairman of the Republican National Committee Ken Mehlman.

Following the conclusion of Winter Saban and the Advanced Advocacy Mission, students returned to their campuses equipped to mobilize against Iran's nuclear ambitions, increase their involvement in Campaign '08 and highlight the value of the U.S.-Israel strategic alliance in its 60th year. To motivate and guide AIPAC

campus activists working on these initiatives, AIPAC campus professionals have hit the road, visiting a record 40 campuses in January alone.

This semester, AIPAC-trained students are educating their peers to understand the threat of Iran's nuclear program through campus seminars, editorials and other public awareness-raising activities.

To maximize their impact on the 2008 elections, AIPAC-trained activists are supporting the candidates of their choice and getting involved in federal, state and local races, allowing them to gain access to key political figures, build important relationships and help influence policy makers now and into the future.

While detractors of the U.S.-Israel relationship may attempt to exploit Israel's 60th anniversary to undercut campus affinity, pro-Israel students are turning this challenge into an opportunity to mobilize their base for greater activism culminating in spring Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrations. •NER•

Critical Aid...cont'd from pg. 1

The Appropriations Committee will be able to block any disbursements that do not conform to these provisions.

For the first time, Congress this year added a provision in the bill linking Egypt's economic and military aid to Cairo's efforts to stem weapons smuggling into the Gaza Strip. The provision conditions \$100 million of Egypt's assistance on a certification by the

secretary of state that Egypt has taken steps to detect and destroy the smuggling network from Egypt into Gaza, implement judicial reforms and curb police abuse, unless a national security waiver is invoked.

Lowey—with the support of her counterparts Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA) and Sens. Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Judd Gregg (R-NH)—played the key role in crafting this bill and securing its final passage. •NER•

Periodicals postage paid at Washington DC and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to Near East Report, 440 First St., NW Suite 607 Washington DC 20001

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Washington, DC 20001
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(ISSN 0028-176X).
Published biweekly
except when Congress is
out of session by Near
East Research, Inc. at
440 First St., NW
Suite 607
Washington, DC 20001

Subscriptions \$50
per year, for circula-
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