

Heard on the Hill

Senate approves \$2.4 billion in military aid to Israel. The Senate passed the fiscal year 2008 foreign aid appropriations bill, which includes \$2.4 billion in military aid and \$40 million in refugee assistance to Israel as part of the 2008 budget. The measure passed by a vote of 81-12. The aid, which the House approved when it passed its version of the Foreign Operations Appropriations bill last June, represents the last year of a 10-year plan between Washington and Jerusalem to phase out economic aid to Israel while gradually increasing the amount of military aid.

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Senate cuts off funding for U.N. Human Rights Council, urges Egypt to end Gaza arms smuggling. The Senate approved an amendment to the fiscal year 2008 foreign aid appropriations bill that cuts off funding to the United Nations Human Rights Council due to its politicized attacks against Israel. Sen. NORM COLEMAN (R-MN), who introduced the measure, said the Council amounts to a platform for “shielding human rights-violating regimes from scrutiny” while “launching spiteful attacks against Israel.” The House passed a similar measure earlier this year. The Senate also passed a measure introduced by Sen. JON KYL (R-AZ) that urges Egypt to crack down on weapons smuggling across its border with the Gaza Strip, a major source of arms for Hamas.

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Lawmakers speak out on Sderot rocket attacks. Reps. ANTHONY WEINER (D-NY) and SHELLEY BERKLEY (D-NV) organized a “special order” session on the House floor to highlight the continuing rocket attacks against Israeli civilians in Sderot. Weiner and Berkley, along with Reps. JASON ALTMIRE (D-PA) and STEVE ISRAEL (D-NY), spent an hour voicing their outrage over the continuing attacks by Palestinian terrorist groups in Gaza, who have fired some 2,700 rockets into Israel since the beginning of 2005. •NER•

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NEAR EAST

Report

SEPTEMBER 16-30, 2007
AIPAC'S BIWEEKLY ON AMERICAN
MIDDLE EAST POLICY

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

On Gaza's Edge

The loud wail of an air raid siren pierces the air. Residents of Sderot know what this means: a Qassam rocket fired by terrorists in the Gaza Strip will explode somewhere nearby in about 15 seconds. The scene plays out three times a day, on average, often with terrifying consequences.

On September 11, a rocket scored a nearly direct hit on an Israeli tent where soldiers in basic training were sleeping. The attack on the Zikim training base wounded 69 people, and at press time, one man was fighting for his life with severe head wounds. Another had his leg amputated as a result of the attack.

Earlier this month, a Qassam barely missed a Sderot kindergarten on the second day of school. Twelve children were treated for shock at the hospital. Had the rocket landed just a few meters away, the results could have been devastating.

For Israeli families in Sderot, Kibbutz Nahal Oz and other towns within firing range of the Gaza Strip, this scene plays out several times a day, creating constant stress.

Terrorists from Hamas, Islamic
...see *Editor's Comments cont'd* on pg. 66

Securely United

UNITED STATES AND ISRAEL SIGN
LANDMARK 10-YEAR SECURITY AGREEMENT

The United States and Israel have signed a new agreement that provides Israel with \$30 billion in security assistance over the next decade, ensuring the Jewish state's qualitative military edge over its neighbors and enabling it to meet new and growing strategic threats.

Under this new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Israel will receive \$2.55 billion beginning in fiscal year 2009, with gradual increases over the next four years. The figure will level off at \$3.1 billion for the remaining six years.

The new agreement comes as the original 10-year MOU, signed by President



Photo by the Associated Press

Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns recently met Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in Jerusalem.

Bill Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in 1998, comes to an end next year.

Enacted during the height of the Oslo peace process and before the extent of the Iranian nuclear program was known, the original plan phased out economic aid to Israel while gradually increasing military aid.

The plan to bolster Israel's defense needs is a vital component of U.S. efforts to meet its longstanding commitment to maintain Israel's qualitative military edge in a dynamic and increasingly challenging regional environment.

In signing the MOU during a special trip to Israel, Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns stressed that the agreement
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NER INTERVIEWS

PROFESSOR ASHER SUSSER, EXPERT IN PALESTINIAN AND JORDANIAN AFFAIRS

Professor Asher Susser currently teaches Arab Politics at Brandeis University. He has served as Director of The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University since 2001 and is one of Israel's leading experts on Jordan and the Palestinians.



Professor Asher Susser feels that Jordan can play a constructive role, but won't unless Palestinians ask.

NER: What are the ramifications of the Hamas takeover of Gaza for Israel and the Palestinians?

ASHER SUSSER: The takeover has immediate negative security ramifications. Gaza is now controlled by people who completely reject the peace process and seek to reverse it through “armed struggle.” But there is also a deeper trend at work here that affects the entire region.

While Hamas' victory can be partially explained by the weakness of [Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud] Abbas and Fatah's corruption and ineffectiveness, something much deeper is at work here. Hamas' defeat of Fatah represents the region-wide decline of secular nationalism and the rise of radical Islam. And this has far-reaching ramifications for Israel, for the state system in the entire region and for U.S. foreign policy.

Radical Islam is defeating more than a century-and-a-half of secularization and Westernization efforts, which have not achieved the expected results. This is the key facet of Palestinian politics, where secular nationalism is on its way out. Against this

background, the building up of Abbas is a long shot.

NER: Is there an alternative to strengthening Abbas?

SUSSER: The alternatives are not appealing, and the building up of Abbas is a reasonable option at present. But it's an option that I think holds little promise because it lies on weak foundations. As I explained, the underlying problem is much wider and deeper. Nonetheless, the policy of building up Fatah, building up Abbas, and reinforcing the PA's security forces must be pursued as decisively as possible.

NER: Do you foresee a potential armed conflict between Fatah and Hamas in the West Bank?

SUSSER: As long as Israel is present in the West Bank, I don't. If Israel were to withdraw from the area, I think the fight would be on very soon and I'm not sure who would win. There is a strong tendency to assume that Fatah is stronger than Hamas in the West Bank, but I would be very hesitant to put that to the test. Let's remember that Hamas won the [2006 parliamentary] elections not just in Gaza, but in the West Bank too.

NER: As a Jordan specialist, do you think the Jordanians can play a significant role in helping Abbas move the peace process forward?

SUSSER: I think that since Gaza at the moment has been shunted aside and all the focus is on the West Bank, Jordan's role may become more important. Jordan obviously has a particular interest in the West Bank. Jordan can be very helpful in shuttling between the Israelis and Palestinians.

Jordan can be helpful in getting the Palestinians to get their act together and to make their administration somewhat more effective. But this is something the Palestinians have to ask the Jordanians to do. Jordan will not do this, and will not contribute positively—as it can—unless it gets the message directly from the Palestinians that the Palestinians want it to do this.

This message has to come from Abbas and from Palestinian public opinion in the West Bank. Hamas is not important in this particular respect. The Jordanians will not allow themselves to be regarded as subversive of the Palestinians. But if there is Palestinian goodwill towards Jordanian involvement, then this involvement can be very important.

HAMAS' DEFEAT OF FATAH REPRESENTS THE REGION-WIDE DECLINE OF SECULAR NATIONALISM AND THE RISE OF RADICAL ISLAM.

Jordan desperately fears that if Israel and the Palestinians do not come to some kind of reconciliation, further conflict between them could reach such a level of ferocity that Palestinians would flee from the West Bank to Jordan. To help avoid such an eventuality, the Jordanians have a serious interest in helping the Israelis and Palestinians move ahead toward a settlement.

NER: Do you think that a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation could become a reality after Israel and the Palestinians reach a permanent peace settlement?

SUSSER: I think a confederation could emerge, but the Palestinians would have to make it very clear that this is what they're asking for. And for a confederation to be part of the architecture, a Palestinian state would have to be in place first. For now, King Abdullah has thrown icy water on the idea.

NER: Is there a risk to Israel in the Middle East meeting tentatively planned for November?

SUSSER: I think the main risk to Israel in the November meeting would be a perception that it had failed. That would send a message that diplomacy is not working. And when people in the region feel that diplomacy is not working, they tend to go back to the battlefield. That is exactly what happened after the Camp David summit in 2000, and that is precisely what Hamas and the other terrorist groups want. They will come out of the woodwork and do everything they can to make the meeting fail. •NER•

Cycle of Defiance

IRAN REACHES AGREEMENT WITH THE IAEA THAT IGNORES PREVIOUS UNMET DEMANDS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL AND DOES NOTHING TO HALT IRAN'S ILLICIT NUCLEAR WORK

As Iran continues to ignore U.N. Security Council demands to suspend its enrichment of uranium, the regime is looking to use a recent agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to undermine efforts by the international community to impose further sanctions.

With the Security Council considering a third round of sanctions on Tehran for its continuing defiance, the Islamic Republic recently struck a deeply problematic deal with the IAEA that creates a mechanism for Iran to answer longstanding questions about its nuclear program.

The IAEA Agreement with Iran Has Serious Deficiencies

The agreement overlooks key concerns about Iran's nuclear program. It does not require Iran to suspend its nuclear activity in accordance with the U.N. Security Council's requirements. Iran is also not required to provide access to key people, facilities and documents needed to verify its claims.

The agreement, which sets a new timetable for Iran to answer questions that the IAEA has repeatedly asked, will likely allow Iran to draw out the negotiating process until late 2007 or early 2008 by calling for the resolution of one issue at a time. This gives Iran months to develop its nuclear program, while attempting to further delay

new U.N. Security Council sanctions.

The deal comes as the atomic agency issued a report detailing Iran's continuing failure to meet the Security Council requirements to suspend its nuclear program.

The Deal Effectively Ignores Iran's Ongoing Illicit Nuclear Activity

In its report, the IAEA found that as of mid-August, "Iran has not suspended its enrichment related activities," and continues to operate close to 2,000 centrifuges at its nuclear facility in Natanz. This work is a key step in the production of nuclear weapons.

The report also states that Iran is continuing construction of the heavy water production plant at Arak, despite Security Council Resolution 1737's explicit demand that it suspend work on all heavy water-related projects.

Iran's ambassador to the IAEA, Dr. Ali Asghar Soltaniyeh, recently confirmed that Iran's enrichment activities are "continuing non-stop," while Mohammad Ali Hosseini, spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, said that "there has been no slowing down, no halt and no retreat" on the nuclear program.

The report concludes that "the Agency remains unable to verify certain aspects relevant to the scope and nature of Iran's nuclear program," and acknowledges that Iran may possess undeclared nuclear materials.

International Pressure on Iran Must Continue to Build

Regardless of the agreement between the IAEA and Iran, work continues on a third Security Council resolution. "No matter what they do with the IAEA, that still is not going to...prevent us from pursuing a third Security Council resolution because Iran has not suspended its enrichment activities at Natanz and that's the crucial factor here," Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns said.

The Security Council has thus far failed to act since Iran missed a May deadline to comply with U.N. Resolution 1747 and suspend its uranium enrichment activities. There are a number of stepped-up sanctions the Security Council could take to impact Iran's ability to finance its nuclear pursuit.

Restrictions on two of the lead sponsors of Iran's nuclear program—Bank Melli, Iran's largest state-owned bank, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Iran's elite military force—would dramatically raise the financial pressure on the regime.

As Iran's illicit atomic work continues unabated, tough and concerted efforts by the IAEA, United Nations Security Council and the international community could reverse Iran's nuclear drive. •NER•

FLAWED AGREEMENT

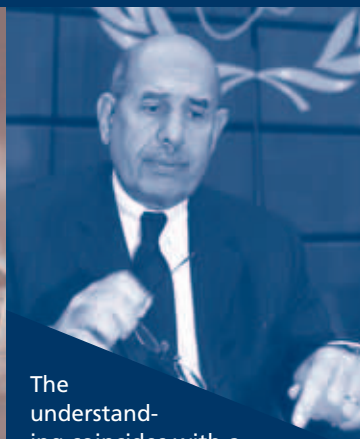
PROBLEMS WITH THE RECENT IAEA UNDERSTANDING WITH IRAN



The agreement sets a new, sequential timetable that allows Iran to buy time and stretch out negotiations.



Iran is not required to suspend its nuclear activity as required by the U.N. Security Council.



The understanding coincides with a new IAEA report that clearly spells out Tehran's ongoing violations.



Iran is not required to provide nuclear inspectors with access to key people, facilities and documents.

Jihad and other groups are firing the rockets from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip. Following Israel's complete unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2005, Palestinian terrorists have fired more than 2,000 Qassams into Israel from the coastal territory. Since Hamas violently seized control of Gaza in June of this year, terrorists have launched more than 200 rockets into Israel.

No country would tolerate a constant barrage of rockets against its civilian population. With Israeli civilians being killed by terrorists operating in Hamas-controlled territory, Israel has a right and a responsibility to protect its citizens.

"Gaza is controlled by Hamas," said Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni. "This means something, and life cannot go on as normal there as well, even if we cannot completely prevent the firing of Qassams. I think there are things that a state is obligated to do."

In response to the rockets, the IDF has stepped up defensive measures by conducting pinpoint raids into Gaza. Despite its successes, the rockets are continuing.

Hamas is calculating that a large enough Israeli response will damage the possibility of an agreement between the Palestinian Authority government of President Mahmoud Abbas and Israel. Nevertheless, if Hamas is unwilling to prevent attacks from Gaza, Israel will be forced to do so. It is an indelicate challenge. •NER•

In Memoriam: Charles A. Vanik, 94

THE FORMER OHIO REPRESENTATIVE CO-SPONSORED THE 1974 JACKSON-VANIK AMENDMENT, WHICH PRESSURED THE SOVIETS TO ALLOW JEWS TO EMIGRATE

NER mourns the loss of former Rep. Charles A. Vanik (D-OH), who passed away at the age of 94 this month. Vanik, who represented his Cleveland-area constituents in Congress for 26 years, played a vital role in enabling close to a million Jews to leave Soviet persecution behind and move to Israel.

In 1972, the Kremlin moved to restrict emigration of Soviet Jews—the most educated segment of society—by imposing a “diploma tax” equal to 20 times their annual salary. This made it almost impossible for Jews to leave, resulting in what Jewish activists denounced at the time as “a new category of human beings—slaves in the 20th century.”

When the amendment—which would have linked U.S. trade benefits to the fundamental human right of free emigration—was first proposed in Congress in 1973, President Nixon opposed it. Persistent lobbying by a unified Jewish community, aided by church, labor and civic groups, however, generated overwhelming public support for the move.

With support building, Vanik, along with then-Senator Henry M. Jackson (D-WA), co-

sponsored the Jackson-Vanik amendment to the Trade Act of 1974. Following unanimous passage by both houses of Congress, President Ford signed the bill into law on January 3, 1975. The measure denies unconditional normal trade relations to certain countries with non-market economies that restrict emigration rights.

Following passage of the amendment, Moscow repealed the onerous diploma tax, although emigration was still difficult. Finally, after years of pressure, the Soviet Union opened the floodgates for nearly a million Soviet Jews to emigrate. Most went to Israel, where they now constitute 18 percent of the Jewish population.

Rep. Vanik was a courageous leader who stood up for what is right. Speaking on the House floor this month, Rep. Alcee Hastings (D-FL) said that Vanik “left a legacy of deep respect.” His amendment’s success demonstrated that economic pressure can achieve important results, especially when accompanied by determination and unity in the face of tyranny. •NER•

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represents a vital U.S. “investment in peace” and that “a secure and strong Israel is in the interests of the United States.”

Both countries have long recognized that their mutual goals of deterring war, promoting stability and achieving peace are only possible if the United States continues to ensure Israel’s military superiority over its potential adversaries.

Indeed, Israel faces greater threats today than it did a decade ago. Among other dangers, Iran is closer than ever to developing a nuclear weapons capability. Meanwhile, Iran and Syria have helped the terrorist group Hizballah replenish its stockpile of rockets to levels that exceed its inventory before last summer’s war—reportedly 20,000 and growing. •NER•

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