



Legislative Bulletin.....January 9, 2009

Contents:

H.Res. 34— Recognizing Israel’s right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirming the United States’ strong support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Order of Business: The resolution is scheduled to be considered on Friday, January 9th, under a motion to suspend the rules and pass the resolution.

Summary: H.Res. 34 resolves that the House:

- “expresses vigorous support and unwavering commitment to the welfare, security, and survival of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state with secure borders, and recognizes its right to act in self-defense to protect its citizens against Hamas’s unceasing aggression, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter;
- “encourages the Administration to work actively to support a durable and sustainable cease-fire in Gaza , as soon as possible, that prevents Hamas from retaining or rebuilding its terrorist infrastructure, including the capability to launch rockets and mortars against Israel, and thereby allowing for the long-term improvement of daily living conditions for the people of Gaza.”

Additionally, the resolution:

- calls on Hamas to end the rocket and mortar attacks against Israel and recognize their right to exist;”
- calls on all nations to “condemn Hamas for deliberately embedding its fighters, leaders, and weapons in private homes, schools, mosques, hospitals, and otherwise using Palestinian civilians as human shields, while simultaneously targeting Israeli civilians;”
- supports efforts to halt the influence of extremists in the Palestinian territories;
- calls on Egypt to “halt smuggling between Gaza and Egypt;”
- calls for the release of the kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, who has been illegally held in Gaza since June 2007; and
- reiterates strong support for a “just and sustainable resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

Additional Background: On December 19, 2008, Hamas formally ended its cease-fire with Israel.

On December 24, 2008, rockets from Gaza were launched into Israel. In response to the rocket and mortar attacks which were only increasing in number and frequency, on December 27, 2008, Israel launched an airstrike on the Gaza strip. The attack was the beginning of an onslaught of attacks from Hamas – the U.S.-recognized Foreign Terrorist Organization founded with the intent to destroy Israel – along with retaliation attacks from Israel. Hamas was elected to represent the Palestinians in 2006.

Unable to ignore the attacks, recent appeals have been made for a ceasefire by the international community. A group with interests in Middle East peace known as the Quartet (the United States, the EU, Russia, and UN) proposed a cease-fire on December 30, 2008. However, without a commitment from Hamas that it will stop attacking Israel with rocket fire, the agreement did not gain much traction.

On January 3, 2009, after continuing rocket attacks, Israel began a ground invasion of Gaza. Their efforts were met with a call to arms from Palestinian leaders asking Palestinians to rise up and suicide bomb Israel and continue the rocket and mortar attacks.

On January 6, 2008, Egypt, France, and other European countries proposed an immediate cease-fire. Again, the proposal did not gain traction. And despite international pleas, including Egypt President Mubarak's willingness to put pressure on Hamas, and most recently, a U.N. call for a cease-fire, the conflict continues in the Middle East.

More than 6,000 rockets and mortars have been launched into Israel since Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005. Since the attacks began, Hamas has made it very clear that it has no intention of coming to a peaceful solution. As recently as Thursday, January 8, rockets were being fired into Israel from Lebanon, and while Lebanese militants (Hezbollah) have assured their government that they did not launch these rockets, no one has claimed responsibility for the attacks.

Committee Action: The resolution was not considered in committee.

Administration Position: The Bush Administration has called for Hamas to halt its rocket and mortar attacks against Israel and supports a cease-fire between the two.

Cost to Taxpayers: The resolution would authorize no expenditure.

Does the Bill Expand the Size and Scope of the Federal Government?: No.

Does the Bill Contain Any New State-Government, Local-Government, or Private-Sector Mandates?: No.

Does the Bill Comply with House Rules Regarding Earmarks/Limited Tax Benefits/Limited Tariff Benefits?: Though the bill contains no earmarks, and there's no accompanying committee report, the earmarks rule (House Rule XXI, Clause 9(a)) does not apply, by definition, to legislation considered under suspension of the rules.

House Rule XXI, Clause 9(d) defines "earmark" as "a provision or report language included

primarily at the request of a Member, Delegate, Resident Commissioner, or Senator providing, authorizing or recommending a specific amount of discretionary budget authority, credit authority, or other spending authority for a contract, loan, loan guarantee, grant, loan authority, or other expenditure with or to an entity, or targeted to a specific State, locality or Congressional district, other than through a statutory or administrative formula-driven or competitive award process.”

RSC Staff Contact: Natalie Farr, natalie.farr@mail.house.gov, (202) 226-0718