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SENATOR FOR ARKANSAS

Taylor Force Martyr Payment Prevention Act

Background

In March 2016, a member of the Palestinian terrorist organization Hamas murdered U.S. Army veteran Taylor Force in Tel Aviv, Israel. The terrorist that stabbed Taylor also severely wounded ten others before being killed by Israeli police. Soon thereafter, the terrorist's family started receiving "martyr payments" from the Palestinian Authority (PA) as a reward for his actions.

Martyr payments are financial "pay to slay" contributions by the PA to injured or imprisoned terrorists, and the family members of deceased terrorists who attacked Israel. These inducements significantly incentivize acts of terrorism and are often directly proportional in size to the number of those injured or killed during the attack.

In 2018, Congress passed the bipartisan Taylor Force Act, which significantly restricts non-humanitarian U.S. aid to the PA until it ends its "pay to slay" program. The Taylor Force Act recognized the fact that money is fungible and that U.S. aid, even if restricted towards good governance programs, frees up money for the PA to spend more on martyr payments. Although this act penalized the PA for its use of martyr payments, further action is required.

Recent reporting reveals that Palestinian banks and other Middle Eastern banks continue to knowingly process martyr payments, sometimes in U.S. dollar-denominated transactions. These banks flout U.S. anti-terrorism financial regulations but escape sanctions by avoiding an official U.S. presence while maintaining correspondent accounts in the United States. This untenable status quo offers a lifeline to the PA "pay to slay" program.

The Taylor Force Martyr Payment Prevention Act is intended to deter foreign banks from making martyr payments by putting at risk their access to the U.S. financial system.

Bill Summary

- The bill strengthens the Treasury Department's existing anti-terrorism financing authorities by giving Treasury the additional authority to designate foreign banks as institutions of primary money laundering concern and to forbid them from holding or using correspondent accounts in the United States if:
 - The banks are used to facilitate or promote martyr payments to terrorists; or if
 - The banks knowingly provide financial services to Hamas.
- The bill also contains a Sense of Congress urging Treasury to use these new authorities to halt martyr payments.

Original Cosponsors

- Blackburn (R-TN), Braun (R-IN), Cramer (R-ND), Cruz (R-TX), Daines (R-MT), Graham (R-SC), Grassley (R-IA), Hagerty (R-TN), Hoeven (R-ND), Hyde-Smith (R-MS), Lankford (R-OK), Marshall (R-KS), R. Scott (R-FL), Rubio (R-FL), Thune (R-SD), Wicker (R-MS), Young (R-IN)

Supportive Organizations

- Republican Jewish Coalition (RJC)
- Zionist Organization of America (ZOA)
- Christians United for Israel (CUFI)