

[Stephen Zunes: Panetta's first foreign policy vote sides with Trump](#)

In the first foreign policy vote of his congressional career, newly elected Democratic Rep. Jimmy Panetta, D-Carmel Valley, shocked many of his constituents by siding with President-elect Donald Trump against President Barack Obama on the question of the role of the United Nations and international humanitarian law.

Democratic leaders here in the 20th Congressional District agree that recently retired Rep. Sam Farr would not have voted for this Republican-backed initiative. Indeed, out of Bay Area's dozen Democrats in Congress, Panetta and freshman Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Fremont, were the only ones to have supported the Republican-sponsored House Resolution 11.

The object of the controversial measure was last month's UN Security Council Resolution 2334. The United States disappointed many proponents of human rights, international law and Israeli-Palestinian peace by being the only country in the 15-member UN Security Council to not support the resolution, voting instead to abstain.

However, Rep. Panetta agreed with Trump and Republican leaders that the Obama administration should have vetoed the UN resolution.

The UN resolution called on both the Israeli and Palestinian governments to prevent violence against civilians, condemn and combat terrorism, refrain from inciting violence and comply with their obligations under international law. However, the House measure supported by Panetta falsely claims that the modest UN resolution tried to "impose" terms of an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement and asserts it is "anti-Israel" and "one-sided" because it also opposed and reiterated the illegality of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories.

Israel is the only country in the world currently engaged in this kind of colonization, which is a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The Jewish-only West Bank settlements have been recognized as illegal by the U.S. State Department, four previous UNSC resolutions, and a landmark ruling by the International Court of Justice.

Both Republican and Democratic administrations have opposed settlement expansion on the grounds that they are "an obstacle to peace." The U.S.-backed peace plans put forward by former CIA Director George Tenet and the Mitchell Commission called for a freeze on Israeli settlement activities, as did the much vaunted "Road Map for Peace," which both the Bush and Obama administrations repeatedly stressed was necessary to resolve the conflict.

The "pro-Israel lobby" was divided on the issue, with moderate Zionist groups like J Street and Americans for Peace Now supporting Obama's decision not to veto the UN resolution and opposing H. Res. 11. As Secretary of State John Kerry noted in a recent speech, the unfettered expansion of Israeli settlements will make the establishment of a viable contiguous Palestinian state alongside Israel impossible — and therefore eventually force Israel to choose between being a democracy or a Jewish state.

Polls show most American Jews support the position of President Obama and the moderate groups.

Panetta, however, joined Republicans in siding with the right-wing Zionist groups, such as the Zionist Organization of America and AIPAC, in support of the anti-UN position of Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and right-wing Israeli settlers.

The resolution backed by Panetta attacked Obama by claiming the administration “departed from longstanding policy” by abstaining on the UN resolution. In reality, the United States has supported or abstained from voting on more than 50 UN Security Council resolutions critical of Israeli actions since 1967 under both Democratic and Republican administrations.

One of the most disturbing aspects of Panetta’s vote is that H. Res. 11 challenges the United Nations’ right to enforce or even simply address issues of international humanitarian law in territories under foreign belligerent occupation, claiming that such matters should be solely a matter of voluntary compliance by the occupying power through direct negotiations with representatives of those under occupation.

The broader implications of this vote, therefore, are quite disturbing. And, given the major role that American Democrats once played in drafting the United Nations Charter and Fourth Geneva Convention, our new congressman’s views on these matters are very disappointing.

It makes one wonder as to how many other issues Rep. Panetta will side with Donald Trump and the Republicans.

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