

NOW Exclusive: US Embassy says congressional letter on Lebanon only "internal procedure"

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In an exclusive interview with NOW on Tuesday night, a US embassy official in Beirut, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that the letter submitted last week by 31 members of the US Congress to US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton "is only an internal procedure between the legislative and executive US branches."

The letter stressed the necessity of disarming Hezbollah, the need to arm the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and the important role of the Lebanese government.

"This letter comes in accordance with the transparent relationship between the two US authorities," the official said. He added that such transparency in granting US aid requires "the executive power to answer any inquiries the congress has, which will either approve or reject the proposal."

He denied reports that there is any implicit message behind sending the letter prior to President Michel Sleiman's US trip scheduled for December 14, saying that the visit will address Lebanese-US bilateral relations, implementation of UN Security Council resolutions and the Middle East peace process.

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US members of Congress push for pressure on Iran, Hezbollah
December 5, 2009

An-Nahar newspaper reported on Saturday that 31 members of the US Congress sent a letter to US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton requesting her to "pressure the Lebanese government and the United Nations to [make an effort to] prevent Iran from using Hezbollah against Israel, and to stop [Hezbollah from] violating UN Security Council Resolution 1701."

The daily reported that the letter also called for the US to assist UNIFIL forces in South Lebanon with an estimated 100-million dollars in funding.

"The situation in South Lebanon is worse following the July 2006 War... Hezbollah has re-armed itself and the newly-formed Lebanese cabinet has given Hezbollah veto powers in government-decision making," the letter said.

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