

ALERT

Updated March 24, 2010

Congressional Statements and Letters Reaffirming the U.S.–Israel Relationship

U.S. Senate

Arizona

- [John McCain \(R-AZ\)](#)

Connecticut

- [Joe Lieberman \(I-CT\)](#)

Kansas

- [Sam Brownback \(R-KS\)](#)

Maryland

- [Benjamin L. Cardin \(D-MD\)](#)
- [Barbara Mikulski \(D-MD\)](#)

Nebraska

- [Mike Johanns \(R-NE\)](#)

New York

- [Kirsten Gillibrand \(D-NY\)](#)

Pennsylvania

- [Arlen Specter \(D-PA\)](#)

Wisconsin

- [Russ Feingold \(D-WI\)](#)

U.S. House of Representatives

Arizona

- [Harry Mitchell \(D-AZ\)](#)

Arkansas

- [John Boozman \(R-AR\)](#)

California

- [Howard L. Berman \(D-CA\)](#)
- [David Dreier \(R-CA\)](#)
- [Mary Bono Mack \(R-CA\)](#)
- [Kevin McCarthy \(R-CA\)](#)
- [Tom McClintock \(R-CA\)](#)

Florida

- [Gus Bilirakis \(R-FL\)](#)

- [Ron Klein \(D-FL\)](#)
- [Connie Mack \(R-FL\)](#)
- [Kendrick Meek \(D-FL\)](#)
- [Ileana Ros-Lehtinen \(R-FL\)](#)
- [Debbie Wasserman Schultz \(D-FL\)](#)

Georgia

- [Tom Price \(R-GA\)](#)

Ohio

- [Jim Jordan \(R-OH\)](#)
- [John Boehner \(R-OH\)](#)

Oklahoma

- [Dan Boren \(D-OK\)](#)

Illinois

- [Mark Kirk \(R-IL\)](#)
- [Mike Quigley \(D-IL\)](#)

Indiana

- [Dan Burton \(R-IN\)](#)
- [Mike Pence \(R-IN\)](#)
- [Mark Souder \(R-IN\)](#)

Kansas

- [Jerry Moran \(R-KS\)](#)
- [Todd Tiahrt \(R-KS\)](#)

Oklahoma

- [Dan Boren \(D-OK\)](#)

Oregon

- [Greg Walden \(R-OR\)](#)

Michigan

- [Thaddeus McCotter \(R-MI\)](#)
- [Gary Peters \(D-MI\)](#)
- [Mark Schauer \(D-MI\)](#)

New Jersey

- [John Adler \(D-NJ\)](#)
- [Robert Andrews \(D-NJ\)](#)
- [Leonard Lance \(R-NJ\)](#)
- [Steve Rothman \(D-NJ\)](#)

New York

- [Gary Ackerman \(D-NY\)](#)
- [Joseph Crowley \(D-NY\)](#)
- [Eliot Engel \(D-NY\)](#)
- [Steve Israel \(D-NY\)](#)
- [Nita Lowey \(D-NY\)](#)
- [Carolyn Maloney \(D-NY\)](#)
- [Anthony Weiner \(D-NY\)](#)

Nevada

- [Shelley Berkley \(D-NV\)](#)

Pennsylvania

- [Chris Carney \(D-PA\)](#)
- [Patrick Murphy \(D-PA\)](#)

Texas

- [John Carter \(R-TX\)](#)
- [Pete Sessions \(R-TX\)](#)
- [Pete Olson \(R-TX\)](#)

Virginia

- [Eric Cantor \(R-VA\)](#)

Washington

- [Cathy McMorris Rodgers \(R-WA\)](#)

Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-NY)

March 16th, 2010

The recent tension in U.S.-Israeli relations is an unfortunate distraction from the real issues that ought to be of foremost concern to ourselves and to our friends in Israel, namely, stopping Iran from acquiring a nuclear arms capability, and enabling Israel to make peace with its neighbors while the regional strategic balance is favorable.

Prime Minister Netanyahu has apologized for the untimely announcement during Vice-President Biden's visit, and I hope and expect that the Administration and the Israeli government will be able to quickly make arrangements to repair the damage to our bilateral relations.

At this critical time, neither country can afford an unnecessary and fruitless distraction from the very daunting challenges we should be facing together. I have every confidence that, with good will, relations will quickly be restored to their normal warmth and candor. *(Press Release)*

Rep. John Adler (D-NJ)

March 16th, 2010

The relationship between the United States and Israel is vital to American security and the stability of the region," Congressman Adler said. "The United States and Israel's cultures are rooted in their common Democratic values and commitment for a lasting peace in the Middle-East. The two countries face many of the same diplomatic challenges in the global community and I remain confident they will stay focused on their shared priorities. *(Press Release)*

Rep. Robert Andrews (D-NJ)

March 17th, 2010

Dear President Obama,

I am writing you regarding the close relationship between the United States and Israel. I ask your Administration to encourage moderation in the rhetoric of all parties despite the recent tensions.

Israel is America's closest ally in the Middle East. The United States and Israel share a relationship that should not be threatened by minor policy differences such as the recent decision to build housing units in East Jerusalem. While small disagreements between our two great nations may exist, we should be careful to continue to emphasize the bonds

that hold us together. To this end, we should try to work out our differences in private whenever possible.

The foundation of the American-Israeli relationship is rooted in our mutual strategic interests, shared democratic values, and a long commitment to peace in the region. I strongly urge the Administration to work closely with our partner Israel to address any issues between the two governments.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Andrews
Member of Congress
(*Letter to President Obama*)

Rep. Shelley Berkley (D-NV)

March 14th, 2010

I am deeply concerned over the comments of the last two days by the Vice President and the Secretary of State. They assert that the Israel-Palestine peace process and the special 60-year bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Israel have been jeopardized by this week's announcement that Israel plans to build housing units in East Jerusalem.

The Administration's strong implication that the enduring alliance between the U.S. and Israel has been weakened, and that America's ability to broker talks between Israel and Palestinian authorities has been undermined, is an irresponsible overreaction. No doubt the administration's overwrought rhetoric is designed to try to appease Palestinian politicians and convince them the U.S. is an honest partner in the peace process by seizing every available opportunity to criticize the actions of our ally Israel.

That strategy also includes ignoring the myriad provocations by Palestinian leaders that make pursuing peace such a long and arduous process. Where, I ask, was the Administration's outrage over the arrest and month-long incarceration by Hamas of a British journalist who was investigating arms-smuggling into Gaza? Where was the outrage when the Palestinian Authority this week named a town square after a woman who helped carry out a massive terror attack against Israel? It has been the PA who has refused to participate in talks for over a year, not the government of Israel. Yet once again, no concern was lodged by the Administration. And, all the while, Hamas restocks its terror arsenal and fires rockets into Israel.

I advocate an even-handed, not a one-sided, U.S. policy as we do the difficult work of establishing peace, and eventually, a Palestinian state. These are critical goals for our nation and for the future of the Middle East. We owe the process nothing less than fairness, candor, and intellectual honesty, not a policy of constant appeasement and reinforcement of the Palestinians' failings as legitimate partners in the peace process.

I strongly believe that despite this weeks flap over Israel's announcement regarding housing construction, the U.S.-Israel relationship is strong and our partnership in pursuit of peace remains undiminished. I call on the White House to rethink its counterproductive rhetoric and to affirm that the U.S. and Israel remain united in pursuing a fair, equitable, and honest peace process with the Palestinian powers that be. *(Press Release)*

Rep. Howard L. Berman (D-CA)

March 16th, 2010

The Administration had real justification for being upset with the timing of the settlements announcement. A process was supposed to be in place to keep the United States from being blindsided by just such a development, and yet once again we were blindsided. The Israeli leadership needs to get this right and put a system in place so it won't happen again.

But let's put the situation in perspective. The United States and Israel have very good cooperation on any number of matters, and this will continue. These include keeping Iran from developing nuclear weapons, the Goldstone Report, and security assistance. U.S.-Israel security ties are in many ways closer than they have ever been, and they are certainly far stronger than the news stories of the past few days would lead one to believe.

We need to disentangle bilateral relations from the peace process. Let's keep in mind that peace talks are not a gift to one party or the other. They are an opportunity for both parties, Israelis and Palestinians, both of whom badly need peace. The Palestinians may not like an Israeli announcement about prospective housing in Jerusalem, and the Israelis may not like the Palestinians naming a town square after a brutal terrorist, but the talks need to go forward. *(Press Release)*

Rep. Mary Bono Mack (R-CA)

March 16th, 2010

"Israel has long been a trusted ally and friend of the United States," said Bono Mack. "It is concerning that the Administration continues to make allowances for and placate nations who oppose U.S. interests and the very values of freedom and democracy, while escalating rhetoric against a long-standing and important ally who shares our values and ideals.

"To promote stability in the Middle East and work to resolve conflict, we must stand firm against countries like Iran, who continues to destabilize the region with its pursuit of

nuclear weapons, denial of its citizens of basic human rights and state-sponsored acts of terrorism. Such behavior is unacceptable, and is threatening not only the national security of our friend and ally - Israel, but also the entire region.

“I remain committed to our bilateral relationship with Israel and will continue to support honoring our commitments and friendship as we face threats from around the world.”
(Press Release)

Rep. John Boozman (R-AR)

March 17th, 2010

The Administration has lost focus on what has been the cornerstone of our foreign policy in the Middle East. We have an unbreakable bond with Israel, but the Administration is systematically eroding that relationship. The lack of clear objective and strategy by the Administration challenges and poses a security threat both in the Middle East as well as to our national security.

Rep. Dan Boren (D-OK)

March 29th, 2010

Madam Speaker, I rise today to insert my views into the Record regarding the importance of the relationship between the United States and Israel.

Vice President Biden's visit last week to Israel and subsequent public statements made by U.S. and Israeli officials have given rise to a storm of speculation about the strength and durability of the alliance between our two nations.

The Obama administration in recent days has expressed frustration over an announcement made by the Israeli government during the Vice President's visit that it intends to build 1,600 additional housing units in East Jerusalem.

The administration contends such plans place in jeopardy its initiative to resume peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians, and has publically rebuked Israel for last week's announcement, an act seldom seen from U.S. Government officials.

These events deeply concern me, and I find the administration's rhetoric troubling. Now is the time for greater solidarity between the United States and Israel, not less. We cannot forget that the United States faces considerable challenges in the Middle East. Iran is quickly advancing its nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities to threaten the United States and our allies in the Middle East and Europe. Our significant political and military gains in Iraq and Afghanistan remain fragile and reversible. Moreover, the

Middle East remains the epicenter of violent extremism, serving as a base for terrorist groups who continue to plan and launch attacks against America.

The United States cannot confront these threats alone. Israel has been our most critical partner in the Middle East, helping us to protect our national security. The ability of the United States to defeat our adversaries depends on Israeli support.

Bringing my remarks to conclusion, the relationship between the United States and Israel rests firmly upon the foundation of more than half a century of history. It is grounded in mutual respect, supported by shared values, and guided by our common long-term interests. Therefore, our alliance remains strong and, despite what some may speculate, it will not succumb to the shifting politics of the day or to petty disagreements.

Madam Speaker, for these reasons I call upon the President, members of his administration, and my fellow members of Congress, to remain steadfast in their unwavering commitment to the relationship between the United States and Israel. (*Floor Statement*)

Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL)

March 16th, 2010

Israel is our single most important, strategic ally in the Middle East, serving on the front lines in our joint battle against terrorism and weapons proliferation. Since 1948, Israel has not only survived under the most horrific of circumstances, but flourished to become the only prosperous, democratically-elected nation in the Middle East. That is why I am disturbed by the recent public reprimand and inflammatory remarks by the Obama Administration toward Israel. The Administration's admonishments are detrimental to the peace process and ultimately jeopardize our national security.

As Israel faces increased hostility from inside and outside of her borders, now is not the time to falter in our steadfast support for her. We must be unequivocal in ensuring Israel's existence by preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and fostering peace between Israel and her neighbors. (*Press Release*)

Rep. John Boehner (R-OH)

March 15th, 2010

The Administration's decision to escalate its rhetoric following Vice President Biden's visit to Israel is not merely irresponsible, it is an affront to the values and foundation of our long-term relationship with a close friend and ally.

The Administration has demonstrated a repeated pattern since it took office: while it

makes concessions to countries acting contrary to U.S. national interests, it ignores or snubs the commitments, shared values and sacrifices of many of our country's best allies.

If the Administration wants to work toward resolving the conflict in the Middle East, it should focus its efforts on Iran's behavior, including its pursuit of nuclear weapons, its state-sponsorship of terrorism, its crushing of domestic democratic forces, and the impact its behavior is having, not just on Israel, but also on the calculations of other countries in the region as well as on the credibility of international nonproliferation efforts. House Republicans remain committed to our long-standing bilateral friendship with Israel, as well as to the commitments this country has made.

The tone and substance we are seeing emerge as a pattern for this Administration are both disappointing and of great concern. Israel has been and remains a close friend and ally, and we need to focus our efforts and energy on the issues of mutual concern for both countries, most especially Iran." (*Floor Statement*)

*Signer of Letter to President Obama – [See Below](#)**

Rep. Dan Boren (D-OK)

March 19th, 2010

I rise today to insert my views into the record regarding the importance of the relationship between the United States and Israel.

Vice President Biden's visit last week to Israel and subsequent public statements made by U.S. and Israeli officials have given rise to a storm of speculation about the strength and durability of the alliance between our two nations.

The Obama administration in recent days has expressed frustration over an announcement made by the Israeli government during the Vice President's visit that it intends to build 1,600 additional housing units in East Jerusalem.

The administration contends such plans place in jeopardy its initiative to resume peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians, and has publically rebuked Israel for last week's announcement, an act seldom seen from U.S. government officials.

These events deeply concern me, and I find the administration's rhetoric troubling. Now is the time for greater solidarity between the United States and Israel, not less.

We cannot forget that the United States faces considerable challenges in the Middle East. Iran is quickly advancing its nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities to threaten the United States and our allies in the Middle East and Europe. Our significant political and military gains in Iraq and Afghanistan remain fragile and reversible. Moreover, the

Middle East remains the epicenter of violent extremism, serving as a base for terrorist groups who continue to plan and launch attacks against America.

The United States cannot confront these threats alone. Israel has been our most critical partner in the Middle East, helping us to protect our national security. The ability of the United States to defeat our adversaries depends on Israeli support.

Bringing my remarks to conclusion, the relationship between the United States and Israel rests firmly upon the foundation of more than half a century of history. It is grounded in mutual respect, supported by shared values, and guided by our common long-term interests. Therefore, our alliance remains strong and, despite what some may speculate, it will not succumb to the shifting politics of the day or to petty disagreements.

Madam Speaker, for these reasons I call upon the President, members of his administration, and my fellow members of Congress, to remain steadfast in their unwavering commitment to the relationship between the United States and Israel. (*Floor Statement*)

Sen. Sam Brownback (R-KS)

March 15th, 2010

"It's hard to see how spending a weekend condemning Israel for a zoning decision in its capital city amounts to a positive step towards peace," Brownback said. "Rather than launching verbal attacks on our staunch ally and friend, it would be far more worthwhile for this Administration to expend the effort planning for the transfer of our embassy to Jerusalem and tackling the growing Iranian nuclear threat." (*Press Release*)

Rep. Dan Burton (R-IN)

March 15th, 2010

Madam Speaker, one of our best friends in the Middle East, if not the best friend, is Israel. Israel has been criticized by our State Department last week because they were going to build some additional housing in Jerusalem. They have accepted the premise that they shouldn't right now be building housing outside Jerusalem. They have a moratorium on that. I think that was worked out with our government.

But as far as building in Jerusalem is concerned, they have always built in Jerusalem, and they have allowed Christians and Muslims and other groups to build in Jerusalem. So I can't understand why the Secretary of State criticized Israel and Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister, for allowing the construction of new housing in Jerusalem, because it's always been done and there's never been a prohibition against it.

At a time when we should be worrying about what is going on in Iran, a nuclear development program that threatens the entire Middle East and energy supplies that we need in this country to keep our economy going, we certainly should not be criticizing our best friend, Israel. Israel is a best friend. They stuck with us through thick and thin, and we should support them in every way possible. (*Floor Statement*)

Rep. Eric Cantor (R-VA)

March 15th, 2010

To say that I am deeply concerned with the irresponsible comments that the White House, Vice President, and the Secretary of State have made against Israel is an understatement. In an effort to ingratiate our country with the Arab world, this Administration has shown a troubling eagerness to undercut our allies and friends. Israel has always been committed to the peace process, including advocating for direct talks between Israelis and Palestinians, in effort to bring this conflict to an end. Unfortunately, the Palestinian Government continues to insist on indirect talks and slowing down the process.

While it condemns Israel, the Administration continues to ignore a host of Palestinian provocations that undermine prospects for peace in the region. Where is the outrage when top Fatah officials call for riots on the Temple Mount? Why does the Palestinian Authority get a pass when it holds a ceremony glorifying the woman responsible for one of the deadliest terror attacks in Israel's history? Surely, the Administration's double standard has set back the peace process.

Israel continues to be a world leader in the fight against terrorism and speak out against the prospects of a nuclear Iran. For this Administration to treat our special relationship with Israel, one of our closest and most strategic Democratic allies, in this fashion is beyond irresponsible and jeopardizes America's national security. (*Press Release*)

*Signer of Letter to President Obama – [See Below](#)**

Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD)

March 16th, 2010

There is no excuse for Israel's announcement of plans to expand housing units in East Jerusalem when Vice President Biden was on the ground meeting with the highest levels of the Israeli government. While the Vice President was on a mission to restart the peace process, such an announcement was a mistake.

This incident does not diminish the fact that Israel is a critical ally of the United States and our bond runs deep, based on mutually important values and respect. Israeli Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's quick expression of regret is a positive step forward and recognition of our continuing strong relationship. It is important for friends to have an open dialogue. (*Press Release*)

Rep. Chris Carney (D-PA) and Rep. Mark Kirk (R-IL)

March 16, 2010

Dear Mr. President:

We write today to reaffirm our strong commitment to the U.S.-Israel relationship - an extraordinary relationship unlike any other in American history.

The unbreakable bond that ties the United States and Israel roots itself in our shared democratic values of personal freedom and political liberty. In a region filled with brutal dictatorships and terror-sponsoring regimes, Israel stands with the United States on the frontier of freedom - two nations bringing a spark of hope to a region darkened by the despair of repression. And we know that no entity - from Gaza City to Ramallah to Damascus to Tehran - can ever hope to undermine the US-Israeli friendship.

In reaffirming our extraordinary relationship, we recommit ourselves to the following principles:

1. The State of Israel remains the preeminent democracy in the Middle East;
2. The United States has no stronger ally in the Middle East than the State of Israel;
3. Under the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995, official United States policy recognizes Jerusalem as the undivided capital of the State of Israel;
4. The national security of the United States is directly tied to the strength and security of the State of Israel - ensuring Israel's continued military qualitative advantage in the region and completing the U.S.-Israel 10-year Memorandum of Understanding for military assistance remains a key American national security priority; and
5. A nuclear-armed Iran would pose an existential threat to the United States, Israel and democracies around the world - collective action to counter this emerging threat remains the most important issue of our time.

As we write today, Iran's uranium enrichment and ballistic missile programs are accelerating. A nuclear-armed Iran would destabilize the Middle East and pose a direct threat to both American and Israeli citizens. Meanwhile, Iran continues to sponsor global terrorism, undermine U.S. efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan and transfer advanced weapons to its proxies in Syria and Lebanon.

While the recent controversy is regrettable, it should not overshadow the importance of the US-Israel alliance. A zoning dispute over 143 acres of Jewish land in Israel's capital city should not eclipse the growing threat we face from Iran.

To promote Middle East peace and defend America and Israel's national security, we urge your Administration to refrain from further public criticism of Israel and to focus on more pressing issues affecting this vital relationship, such as signing and enforcing the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act when it comes to your desk. (*Letter to the President*)

Rep. Joseph Crowley (D-NY)

March 19th, 2010

Israel is an ally of the United States and I support a deep, enduring relationship. Prime Minister Netanyahu has apologized and explained the inadvertent timing regarding the announcement to construct apartments in East Jerusalem, and now it is time to restore full trust and move ahead. I believe it is important to be mindful that any public strain in the U.S.-Israeli relationship may inadvertently embolden our mutual enemies. At a time when we face mutual, serious challenges in the Middle East – in particular, Iran's nuclear program and the need for a comprehensive peace agreement – there is simply too much to lose from division. United, we will work together to ensure security and build peace in the region. As a member of the Middle East and South Asia Subcommittee in the Committee on Foreign Affairs, I will continue to press for a strong, long-lasting U.S.-Israel relationship. (*Press Release*)

Rep. Eliot Engel (D-NY)

March 15th, 2010

Madam Speaker, I rise this evening to reaffirm the strength of the U.S.-Israel relationship. Both of our countries have shared values. Both of our countries are democracies. Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East. I know there have been some difficulties during the past few days.

When Vice President Biden visited Israel, there was an announcement of the expansion of a neighborhood in North Jerusalem. The timing of that announcement was wrong, but I don't think that we should blow the timing of that announcement out of proportion. We should not have a disproportionate response to Israel. We need to be careful and measured in our response, and I think we all have to take a step back.

The relationship remains rock solid. The Obama administration and the administration of Prime Minister Netanyahu have been cooperating on a number of things: containing Iran,

the Goldstone Report, and making sure that Israel retains its qualitative military edge in the region. And there has been good cooperation between our two administrations, the Obama administration and the Netanyahu administration. But to seem to question the very nature of the U.S.-Israel relationship and to put it in personal terms in a very public way will not contribute to peace in the Middle East. Rather, it's the contrary. It will cause the Palestinians to dig in their heels, thinking that the Americans can just deliver the Israelis.

Last year, when there was public pressure being put on Israel not to expand settlements, there was no simultaneous public pressure being put on the Palestinians, and we saw that the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas just sat back, didn't make any concessions, didn't say that he would do anything positively to further peace talks, and just thought that the United States would wring concessions out of Israel.

The fact of the matter is that the Israelis have been welcoming peace talks with the Palestinians. The Israelis have said they would sit down and have face-to-face talks for peace with the Palestinians. That's what you do when you have peace. Instead, the Palestinians have refused to sit with the Israelis, and Senator Mitchell is proposing to shuttle back and forth between the Palestinian side and the Israeli side to have negotiations, but not direct negotiations.

We need to be careful. If we criticize Israel for doing what we think was wrong, then we need to also criticize the Palestinians when they do things wrong. Just recently, the Palestinians named a square in Ramallah for a terrorist who killed 30-some-odd Israelis. I didn't hear any criticism of the Palestinian side. When the Palestinians dig in their heels and say they won't recognize Israel as a Jewish state, I didn't hear any criticism of Palestinians.

So all I am saying, Madam Speaker, is that we need to not only reaffirm the strength of our ties between our two countries, but we also need to understand that in a relationship between friends, as in family, there will be some disagreements. We need to be careful about how we voice those disagreements in public.

Let me say that harsh words are never a replacement for working together, but I think that harsh words can sometimes make us understand that only by working together can we confront the things that we both know need to be confronted--the scourge of terrorism, the thing that all nations understand emanates in the Middle East from radical forces, and those are the kinds of fights that Israel has every single day fighting terrorism. We learned about terrorism on this soil on 9/11. Israel has to deal with it every day.

So let me just say in conclusion that I think we need to take a step back. We need to reaffirm all the things that bring our two countries together. We in the United States understand that our best friend in the Middle East is Israel, and we need to continue with Israel. When we have disagreements, we have to talk about them, but we have to always understand that only by working together can we have peace in the Middle East. *(Floor Statement)*

Senator Russ Feingold (D-WI)

March 16, 2010

Israel remains an important ally of the United States, and strong U.S.-Israeli relations are essential to the national security of both countries, as well as the security of the region. I am confident that our important bilateral relationship will remain resilient in spite of recent tensions. Rather than focusing on our disagreements, we should work together with Israel and with the Palestinians on the critical task of achieving a peaceful solution to the conflict. *(Press Release)*

Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY)

March 16th, 2010

The close bond between the United States and Israel remains unbreakable, and America will continue to show unyielding support for Israel's security. While the timing of the East Jerusalem housing announcement was regrettable, it must not cloud the most critical foreign policy issue facing both countries — Iran's nuclear threat. As a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I am focused on strengthening international pressure on Iran's regime to derail its pursuit of nuclear weapons. *(Press Release)*

Rep. Steve Israel (D-NY)

March 15th, 2010

Israel is a close friend and ally and our relationship is based on mutual interests and benefits. We need to reaffirm the American-Israeli relationship as Vice President Biden did at Tel Aviv University last week. The Administration, to the extent that it has disagreements with Israel on policy matters, should find way to do so in private and do what they can to defuse this situation. *(Press Release)*

Sen. Mike Johanns (R-NE)

March 16th, 2010

Israel is a strong ally of the United States and we need to stop this infighting and concentrate on our shared goals. At a time of great concern about the strategic situation in the Middle East, particularly Iran's march towards nuclear weapons capability, harsh comments about our relationship with Israel are distracting and counterproductive. Terrorists who threaten Israel must harbor no doubts about our commitment to Israel's

safety. I urge the Administration and the Israeli government to put this recent dispute behind them, to refocus immediately on the peace process, and to move forward together.
(Press Release)

Rep. Jim Jordan (R-OH)

March 17, 2010

Madam Speaker, America has no truer friend in the Middle East than Israel. We stand together on freedom...on democracy...and on security.

More importantly, America and Israel share the unique ability to trace our roots back to the hopes and dreams of our ancestors. From the days of King David and King Solomon, Israel has been the center of the Jewish tradition.

Today, Israel is a sovereign nation. Though surrounded by sworn enemies determined to “wipe it off the map,” Israel remains committed to freedom and democracy.

Madam Speaker, I am concerned about recent counterproductive statements by the Administration that threaten to undermine America’s 60-year relationship with Israel. Criticizing Israel for developing its own land in Jerusalem is just plain wrong. Directing public demands and unilateral deadlines at Israel, while Iran continues its pursuit of nuclear weapons, is beyond wrong. It is dangerous.

Madam Speaker, if America is to be a superpower, we must remain steadfast when political winds blow. If America is to lead the world, we must act as true friends to our allies. *(Floor Statement)*

Rep. Mark Kirk (R-IL)

March 14th, 2010

This year marks the 15th anniversary of the Jerusalem Embassy Act, making it official United States policy that Jerusalem should remain the undivided capital of Israel

As a staff member, I helped draft this historic legislation; as a Congressman I continue to urge its enforcement. History teaches us that a divided Jerusalem leads to conflict while a unified Jerusalem protects the rights of all faiths. I urge the Administration to spend more time working to stop Iran from building nuclear bombs and less time concerned with zoning issues in Jerusalem. As Iran accelerates its uranium enrichment, we should not be condemning one of America’s strongest democratic allies in the Middle East.
(Floor Statement)

Signer of Letter to President Obama – [See Below](#)*

Rep. Ron Klein (D-FL)

March 16th, 2010

The United States has invested immense political capital in restarting negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. Although last week's announcement on new housing in East Jerusalem may have been ill-timed, I am deeply disappointed that even after the Israeli government apologized, State Department and White House officials have sustained their condemnations against the State of Israel, using harsh terms that do not befit the special relationship that the United States and Israel share. Israel has proven its willingness to make sacrifices for peace, but in order to continue to do that Israel must have confidence in the process.

The U.S. and Israel share an entrenched bond, with unbreakable connections, and this spat will not change our deep and abiding friendship with the people and government of Israel. The democratically elected government of Israel, serving its people and its national interest, has made painful sacrifices for peace and should be commended. The Netanyahu government's recent announcement to freeze settlement construction should have hastened the Palestinian Authority to the negotiating table.

At a time when the Palestinian leadership continues to incite violence and threatens to impede negotiations at every step, the United States must stand with its ally, Israel, in its quest for peace. The actions that the Administration expects of the Palestinians may be less measurable than the actions that are expected of the Israeli government; however they are nonetheless crucial to moving negotiations forward. Unfortunately, the Palestinian Authority has fallen short of expectations, and incitement continues. I call on the administration to urge the PA leadership to strengthen their commitment to fighting incitement. Incitement obstructs U.S. efforts to encourage peace in the region and could, understandably, make Israel reticent to negotiate.

We must find common ground and move on. The security threats that the United States and Israel face are too great and too urgent to be overwhelmed by a disagreement among friends. Stopping Iran from getting a nuclear weapon is the most important matter at hand. That must continue to be our main focus as we move ahead. *(Press Release)*

Rep. Leonard Lance (R-NJ)

March 17, 2010

I am deeply concerned with the escalating rhetoric coming from the Obama Administration following Vice President Biden's visit to Israel.

Israel is our closest ally. Our nations share a common security threat of rogue regimes that target both Americans and Israelis. Administration officials should be promoting a robust U.S.-Israel alliance not alienating the preeminent democracy in the region.

The Administration would be better served focusing its energies on Iran's nuclear threat and working in steadfast manner to strengthen international pressure on President Ahmadinejad to end his country's pursuit of nuclear weapons.

I call on President Obama and his top officials to lower their voices against Israel and focus on Iran's nuclear threat to all nations of goodwill."(*Press Release*)

Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-CT)

March 14th, 2010

"In every administration," said Lieberman, "there are times when the US-Israeli relationship is not what it should be. But the guarantor of that relationship is the bipartisan, pro-Israel majority in Congress.

"It was a dust-up, a misunderstanding. (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu has apologized, and the timing was unfortunate. But the second round of criticism is unproductive. I make one appeal – sometimes silence really is golden.

"Our enemies are common; let's not let a mistake grow into a divisive dispute between members of the same family."

"Nothing good is going to happen in the Mideast without both the United States and Israel working together. That's what we need to do, and the sooner the better." (*Floor Statement*)

Colloquy between Sen. John McCain and Sen. Joseph Lieberman – [See Below](#)*

Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY)

March 16th, 2010

Israel is and will remain the United States' most stalwart ally. As the chair of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations, I stand firm in my commitment to maintaining Israel's qualitative military edge and a strong U.S.-Israel relationship.

Having just returned from the region, where I urged Arab leaders to support sanctions on Iran and efforts to achieve peace between Israel and the Palestinians, I believe the stakes

are too high and the threats are too urgent to allow the unfortunate recent exchange between Israel and the United States to derail ongoing diplomacy. I urge Senator Mitchell to return to the region as soon as possible and all parties to come back to the table. (*Press Release*)

Rep. Connie Mack (R-FL)

March 15th, 2010

The Administration's approach to U.S. foreign policy has, so far, been disconcerting. Instead of embracing our allies and standing with them against terrorism and tyranny, the Administration has chummed it up with Latin American thugocrats like Hugo Chavez and failed to speak out against the atrocities of Iranian leader Mahmoud Ahmadinejad after he won the Iranian presidential "election."

Israel is our strongest friend and ally in the Middle East, and they are our partners in the war against terrorism. The Administration should work with Israeli leaders to stand against Iran, which is moving at an alarming pace to acquire nuclear capabilities and spread its hatred and vitriol around the world, including Latin America.

The Administration's careless rhetoric and actions diminish our relationship with Israel and threaten our national security. As a beacon of freedom and opportunity, the United States must stand with our allies, not alienate them.

Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY)

March 22nd, 2010

I rise to reaffirm the strong bonds between Israel and the United States. Israel is the only Democracy in the Middle East. We share the same values, the same commitment to education, the same commitment to development, the same commitment to helping others.

Israel is situated in a dangerous neighborhood, with many of its neighbors overtly calling for its destruction. I was pleased to hear both President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton reaffirm America's close ties to Israel and our commitment to Israel's security in recent days. And I hope that this signals a desire to reduce the appearance of a rift.

During Vice President Biden's recent trip to the Middle East, Palestinian leaders participated in naming a public square for Dalal Mughrabi, the terrorist who led the most devastating attack in Israel's history. In 1978, Mughrabi and her cohorts hijacked a bus and murdered 37 innocent civilians, including 13 children and an American citizen.

Further, during Vice President Biden's visit, senior Fatah leaders, including Mahmud Dahlan, called on Muslims to protect the Temple Mount from the Jews, during the dedication of the reconstructed historic Hurva Synagogue located in the Jewish quarter 500 yards from the Western Wall and not on Temple Mount. President Obama has condemned the rioting that resulted, as was appropriate. I hope America will also take a strong stance against Palestinian leaders who foment violence.

As long as Israelis fear a third intifada and worry about the safety of their families, they will be far less likely to participate in peace talks in which they know they will be asked to take risks for peace. Israelis have already taken risks for peace – they withdrew from Lebanon, they withdrew from the Gaza Strip, they signed peace treaties with Jordan and Egypt, they abandoned the city Yamit in the Sinai desert, and they have released hundreds of terrorists, many of whom have had blood on their hands and many of whom have returned to their terrorist activities.

I believe very strongly that both the Palestinians and the Israelis would benefit from a real, lasting peace agreement and I hope talks will soon resume. But they will not resume if the Palestinians believe they will gain more by not talking. And they cannot resume if Israel feels that its existence or its people are being threatened. In previous administrations, there were direct talks. Today, the best we can hope for are proximity talks. I urge the Administration to take every possible action to quell the tensions between the U.S. and our great friend, Israel, and to create an atmosphere in which both the Palestinians and the Israelis feel comfortable about resolving their differences.

Madam Speaker, I ask my distinguished colleagues to join me in recognizing the importance of maintaining a warm relationship with Israel, our strong ally and good friend. *(Floor Statement)*

Colloquy between Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) and Sen. Joseph Lieberman (I-CT)

March 15th, 2010

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, I say to my friend, I know he has been observing in the last few days the events that have transpired in regard to the situation in Israel and the reaction of the United States to the announcement that there would be additional housing construction in areas the Israelis believe are within the boundaries that will exist once peace is settled, and that the Palestinians are of the view that it is their area--as there are many territorial disputes between the Palestinians and the Israelis, which is one of the reasons there is a compelling argument for a peace process.

I know my friend from Connecticut is disturbed, as I am, about the level of tension in the public discourse that has been going on, which cannot only not be helpful to Israeli-U.S. relations but also to the ability of Israel to deal with other tensions in the region and the existential threats they face from their neighbors who have threatened their extinction.

So I have had the great pleasure and honor of travelling to Israel on numerous occasions with my friend from Connecticut. I would state for the record that no one has a closer relationship and a better understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian situation and the urgency of the peace process.

I would just ask my friend, doesn't he think if we want the Israeli Government to act in a way that would be more in keeping with our objectives, that it does not help them to have public disparagement by the Secretary of State, by the President's political adviser on the Sunday shows? On the contrary, shouldn't we lower the dialog, talk quietly among friends, and work together toward the mutual goals we share?

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I thank my friend from Arizona for the question and for the opportunity to engage in this dialog on the important and troubling course of relations at this moment between the United States and Israel.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that this colloquy be conducted as in morning business.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. I thank the Chair.

I say to my friend from Arizona what not only he knows, but what he has helped to bring about throughout his career, are two things: that the American relationship with Israel is one of the strongest, most important, most steadfast bilateral alliances we have in the world because it is not based on temporal matters--that is, matters that come and go and politics or diplomacy--it is based on shared values, shared strategic interests in the world, and, unfortunately, now on the fact that we in the United States and the Israelis are also targets of the Islamist extremists, the terrorists who threaten the security of so much of the world. So we have a strong bilateral relationship.

The second thing to say, in answering my friend's question, is that the Israelis depend, to a very large degree, on America's friendship as they approach the world. The Senator is absolutely right, without a confidence--not that everything Israel does America will support, but that underlying we are heading in the same direction, we are allies, we are friends, it is as if we are part of the same family. Without that confidence in the U.S.-Israel relationship, the Israelis will not have the confidence to take the risks necessary for peace. So the uproar over the last several days is very troubling in that regard.

Vice President Biden, as my friend knows, went to Israel to reset the relationship. Unfortunately, at that time, from all the Israeli Government says--I have no reason to doubt them--a bureaucratic decision was made within one department of the government, the Ministry of the Interior, to issue a permit--I gather one of seven permits necessary within the next few years for this building project to take place. It has become not just a bureaucratic mistake but a major, for the moment, source of division between our ally, Israel, and ourselves, and it does not help anyone to continue this.

I just want to say briefly to my friend because he said something most people do not know--and this is my understanding of the situation--the permits for this housing are in an area of Jerusalem that is today mostly Jewish. The Israeli Government has taken the position, however, since 1967 that anybody ought to be able to buy property and build and live in any section of Jerusalem they choose to regardless of their religion or nationality or anything else. That is a very American concept.

Secondly, this particular part of Jerusalem is, in most anybody's vision of a possible peace settlement, going to be part of Israel. A lot of Israelis believe all of Jerusalem should remain the eternal unified capital of Israel. But going to the negotiations that occurred between President Clinton, Prime Minister Barak, Chairman Arafat in 2000, which were about as detailed as any recent negotiations, this particular neighborhood of Jerusalem, in the document that was almost accepted by Arafat, was part of Israel.

So it is not a violation of that. It is not a violation of the moratorium on new settlements that Prime Minister Netanyahu adopted, and it ought not to be--I tell you, that first wave of reaction, when Vice President Biden was there, I understood. He was upset. It was embarrassing. Maybe some of the words--"condemn" was a little strong for a bureaucratic mistake. But why this continues now, including on the Sunday talk shows, with Mr. Axelrod saying it was an affront and an insult by Israel to the United States, serves nobody's good. It does not serve our interests; it does not serve Israel's interests. It helps those like the people in Tehran who want to cause difficulty throughout the region.

Mr. McCain. Could I ask my colleague, shouldn't we be emphasizing what I very much appreciated? Vice President Biden--and I quote him--said:

In my experience one necessary precondition for progress [toward peace in the Middle East] is that every time progress is made, it's made when the rest of the world knows there is absolutely no space between the United States and Israel when it comes to security, none.

I thought the Vice President had it exactly right, and as the Senator says: Look, mistakes are made. It is a government in Israel which is sometimes interesting to watch, particularly when you watch the proceedings in the Knesset, the parliamentary proceedings.

But somehow it seems that the rhetoric has escalated and maybe given the impression to the wrong people--the neighbors of Israel who have stated time after time they are bent on Israel's extinction; the statements by Ahmadinejad that he wants to "wipe Israel off the map"--and that perhaps there may be sufficient space, as the Vice President pointed out, that they could exploit that in a way that would be harmful to the State of Israel. I know that was not the intention of the President's political adviser on Sunday, and it is not the intention of the Secretary of State. But the Secretary of State knows the Israelis very well. She has had dealings with all of the countries in the region. She is very knowledgeable and experienced.

I hope all of us would realize, let's lower the rhetoric. Let's try and fix the problems that exist amongst the close friends we are rather than escalate the tensions that exist in a very dangerous time.

The Senator from Connecticut and I were recently briefed about perhaps increased tensions in southern Lebanon, the possibility of attacks from southern Lebanon into Israel, the continued nuclear buildup on the part of the Iranians, the continued statements of assertiveness by the President of Syria, al-Assad.

There are increased tensions in the region, and this is not the time--certainly, most importantly, not the time--that we give the impression that there is such differences between ourselves and Israel that it could be exploited by Israel's enemies.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I thank my friend from Arizona. I agree totally with what he said. I think it is very important the Senator from Arizona has gone to the speech that Vice President Biden made. I believe it was on Wednesday of last week in Tel Aviv at Tel Aviv University.

What is interesting is, that speech came after the first date he was there. When this bureaucratic announcement of housing permits being issued in Jerusalem was made, Vice President Biden put out a statement condemning that action. I understand why he was upset by it, that it had been happening when he came. Prime Minister Netanyahu outright apologized in public for it. He said he is appointing a review committee to look at how it happened so they could set up a mechanism within the Israeli Government so a decision such as that would not be made, if I understood what their intention is, without the Prime Minister's office being notified. Then Vice President Biden made quite an important speech at Tel Aviv University.

The Senator from Arizona is absolutely right. The Vice President said the relationship between the United States and Israel is unbreakable, and there is no space between us. When there is space between us, it only helps our shared enemies, not the two of us, the two great democracies.

Vice President Biden also made clear that while we are committed to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, it is very important for both--and Prime Minister Netanyahu has too. He has taken his Likud Party to a place it has never been before. In a speech he gave at Bar-Ilan University, he said for the first time, very clearly, as the Likud Prime Minister, that he supports the two-state solution: two countries, two peoples side by side. Then he issued that moratorium on settlement expansion in a whole series of areas which Secretary Clinton, in an earlier visit, described as unprecedented.

Then we go to the Vice President's speech. There, he focuses on Iran and the threat of a nuclear Iran, the threat of an Iran that suppresses the rights of its people, and he says not only is Iran explicitly a threat to Israel--as Ahmadinejad has said, threatening Israel's existence--Vice President Biden made very clear our concern about an Iranian nuclear weapon is not because of what Ahmadinejad said about Israel, although, obviously, that

concerns us; it is because a nuclear, autocratic, tyrannical, totalitarian Iran threatens the short-, medium-, and long-term security of the United States of America.

After that speech, I thought this whole business about the permits for housing was over. Yet then the State Department spokesman comes out on Friday with very strong language about the phone conversation with the Secretary of State whom, of course, the Senator from Arizona and I not only respect but like very much. She is our friend, our colleague. She has a long record of support for the United States-Israel relationship. But Friday afternoon's press statement seemed to be dredging up again something that seemed to have been calmed and ought to be calmed.

The Senator from Arizona is absolutely right. I take it that is the point the Senator is making: There is too much that ties us together with Israel, too much on the line for both countries, to continue to make a mistake, for which the Prime Minister of Israel has apologized, into a division between two great allies.

Mr. McCain. Mr. President, wouldn't my colleague agree that the original purpose of the Vice President's trip, as I understand it, was a precursor or even an announcement of indirect talks between the Palestinians and the Israelis, using the good auspices of Senator George Mitchell? So the trip was a signal to the world that the process of peace between Israelis and the Palestinians was on track, and a beginning, albeit a modest one, was taking place.

So it might be good if our friends in the administration--and other places in the United States--could start refocusing our efforts on the peace process, which came very close to the beginning--again, modest, indirect but still beginning--of peace talks and emphasize the need to commence those, assure our Arab friends in the region of our commitment to the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks, and move forward in that direction. We need to understand that the Prime Minister of Israel has apologized and is trying, as the Senator from Connecticut pointed out, to put a mechanism in place to make sure that an incident of this nature would not arise again.

So we could go back--I will not--and be very critical of the Obama administration's initial demand of a complete freeze of settlements which was, in my view, an unnecessary precondition and an impediment, but that is done also. So now we have had our spat, we have had our family fight, and it is time for us to now stop. We have to get our eye back on the goal, which is the commencement of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, and move forward with that--and I know the Senator from Connecticut shares my view--particularly with the leadership we are seeing on the Palestinian side. The chances for fruitful negotiations are better than they have been since the time the Senator from Connecticut cited back when President Clinton had Arafat and Ehud Barak to Camp David.

Mr. Lieberman. Mr. President, I agree totally with my friend. Let's cut the family fighting, the family feud. It is unnecessary, and it is destructive of our shared national interests, the United States and Israel, and it takes our eye off the two balls we have to focus on. One is the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the other is the threat of a

nuclear Iran, which is not only a threat to us and Israel, it is a threat to Palestinian leadership because Iran is the No. 1 supporter of Hamas, which is the foremost antagonist to the leadership of the Palestinian Authority.

The Senator from Arizona is absolutely right. Peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians requires very difficult, delicate negotiations. But we are at a moment--and my friend and I were together in Israel and the Palestinian areas in January of this year and we met with the leadership. It is an interesting moment, because in both countries the economy is doing pretty well. The Palestinians have seen a real surge in economic growth. Security is better on both sides. We have leadership on both sides: Netanyahu in Israel and the President of the Palestinian Authority, Abu Mazen, and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. We have three leaders there committed to the two-state solution, renouncing terrorism, a peaceful process. If, for some reason, people in the American Government continue this dispute, frankly, it makes it hard for not just the Israelis but the Palestinians to get into the peace process because we can't be more demanding than they are, if you will. I think Abu Mazen and Salam Fayyad want to move the peace process forward, I am convinced, as Prime Minister Netanyahu said.

So it is time to lower voices and get over the family feud between the United States and Israel. It doesn't serve anybody's interests but our enemies: George Mitchell--I will say it here--is a saint. Whoever the saint of patience is, George works under that saint's aegis. Through his patience and persistence, the proximity talks between Israel and the Palestinian leadership are about to begin, and they have the prospect of making some real progress.

Mr. McCain. Mr. President, I thank my friend from Connecticut.

I rise today to address the very concerning, and unfortunately very public, tensions that have broken out recently between the governments of the United States and Israel. I am not here to take sides or to call out one party at the expense of the other. There have been enough accusations, recriminations, and bad blood.

I certainly understand the anger felt by members of the U.S. administration that the announcement of new settlement construction in East Jerusalem by Israel's Interior Ministry simply seemed intended to embarrass Vice President Biden in the middle of his visit. I can also understand the anger felt by Israelis that the U.S. reaction to this announcement has been out of step with the announcement itself. At this point, there is little to be gained by either side by focusing on their anger, however justified they feel it is. It is now time to focus on what matters most: the common interests we share, the urgent need for cooperation between us, and the large capacity within our alliance to move beyond differences and work together.

Vice President Biden spoke to exactly these themes in his excellent speech in Tel Aviv during his recent visit to Israel--a speech, I would add, that was delivered 2 days after the Interior Ministry's announcement. Perhaps the most correct and important thing the Vice President said was this: "In my experience one necessary precondition for progress

toward peace in the Middle East is that every time progress is made, it's made when the rest of the world knows there is absolutely no space between the United States and Israel when it comes to security, none." This is absolutely correct, and we all need to remember it right now.

We now have a conservative Israeli leader who is committed to the goal of two States for two peoples, living side by side in peace and security. We have a leadership in the Palestinian Authority that is committed to beginning negotiations while also building the institutions of a democratic Palestinian state, including effective security forces that can enforce the rule of law and fight terrorism. We have a U.S. administration, and U.S. Congress, that is committed to being engaged in and supportive of the pursuit of peace in the Middle East.

So let us focus on the opportunity we have, the United States and Israel together, as historic allies, to achieve goals that serve both our interests. The United States is completely committed to Israel's security, so Israel can feel totally confident in taking on the large and difficult decisions that peace requires. As the Vice President said, there should be no space between these allies--none. (*Floor Statement*)

Rep. Tom McClintock (R-CA)

March 17, 2010

"I rise to express my great concern over the recent statements by administration officials regarding Israeli housing construction in that nation's capital city. History warns us that appeasement of mutual enemies is the surest way to destroy alliances and to invite aggression. And yet the rhetoric of this administration is taking us down this dangerous road. Israel has every right to allow construction in its capital city and throughout the West Bank, over which it exercises rightful sovereignty.

"The administration seems to have forgotten that Jordan attacked Israel in 1967, not the other way around, and the result was the Israeli acquisition of this land. The Israelis haven't forgotten that, nor have they forgotten the folly of unilaterally giving up the Gaza Strip from which rockets are now routinely launched against Israeli citizens. Imagine the danger to Israel's capital by repeating that mistake in east Jerusalem.

"Mr. Speaker, appeasement all but guarantees an escalation of conflict." (*Floor Statement*)

Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA)

March 16th, 2010

I am disappointed at the critical tone this White House has taken with our long-time friend and ally, Israel. The bond between the United States and Israel is based on our shared values of freedom, democracy and the fight against terror. The tone the Administration has taken over the last few days is unworthy of that relationship.

This Administration needs to move beyond this impasse. The Israeli government has already apologized for the poor timing of their housing announcement. It is inconceivable to me that our leaders would not move on and focus on significant dangers in the region.

A nuclear armed Iran is a threat to the national security of both the United States and Israel, and the threat is imminent. But instead of demanding strong sanctions on Iran, this Administration is dragging its feet and picking petty fights with our strongest democratic ally in the Middle East. It is time to dial down this ugly rhetoric and gain the proper perspective on the true threats in the region.” *(Press Release)*

*Signer of Letter to President Obama – [See Below](#)**

Rep. Kendrick Meek (D-FL)

March 17th, 2010

What started off as an internal, domestic disagreement within the Israeli government has turned into an unnecessary international dispute complicated by some undiplomatic language from U.S. administration officials.

Opponents of peace, nations and terrorist organizations that wish to do harm to Israel will always seize an opportunity to create a wedge between our nation and Israel. They seek comfort watching these recent events unfold. To give our enemies the false impression that the United States and Israel disagree on fundamental issues within the region sets the peace process back. I urge restraint and a resumption of talks that result in a lasting peace that ensures Israel’s security. *(Press Statement)*

Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD)

March 18th, 2010

Israel is America’s treasured friend and ally. We are bound together by shared values and interests.

The greatest threat to the security of the United States and Israel does not come from what Israel is building. It comes from what Iran is building. The priority of American foreign policy in the Middle East must be to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. *(Press Release)*

Rep. Harry Mitchell (D-AZ)

March 20th, 2010

Madam Speaker, I rise today to reaffirm my support for Israel.

I was saddened to see the recent disagreement between our two nations spill out onto the front pages of newspapers around the world.

These headlines belie the close and vitally important relationship the United States and Israel enjoy, and will continue to enjoy.

And it is important for the world to know that we stand shoulder to shoulder. Israel shares our democratic values. And they are forced to defend these values daily against countless in their neighborhood who would like to wipe Israel off the map. The threat of rocket attacks is nearly constant for Israelis. I had the opportunity to visit Israel last year, and I witnessed firsthand some of the damage caused by rocket attacks by Hamas from Gaza. I am amazed at the determination of the Israelis to continue to lead normal lives despite the constant threats and reminders of terrorism. It was particularly evident during a trip to Sderot, at an indoor playground that also functions as a bomb shelter.

The threat from Iran is even more ominous. The Holocaust denials, the arms shipments to terrorists, the quest for nuclear weapons--to say this is alarming would be an understatement.

These actions are not just a threat to Israel, they are a threat to the United States, and that is why I support strong sanctions against Iran.

That is also why I believe we are lucky to have a close ally like Israel in the region.
(Floor Statement)

Rep. Jerry Moran (R-KS)

March 17th, 2010

Despite the diplomatic inconsistencies of the Obama administration, one thing is certain: Support for the U.S.-Israeli alliance remains strong in Congress.

Israel is America's closest friend in the most volatile region of the world. It is a democracy that shares our values and hopes for a more peaceful world. Regrettably, the administration's recent misstep undermines our shared goal of peace and distracts from more pressing issues. Israel has a history of making peace with its neighbors and is

prepared to make peace now. But peace is a two-way street, and the Palestinians' commitment to that peace is in doubt. Rather than make demands upon Israel for concession after concession, President Obama should work closely and privately with Israel, recognizing our two nations' long and trusted alliance. Israeli peace agreements between Egypt and Jordan have been reached in the past when U.S. support for Israel was strong and consistent. The same level of commitment and closeness is now needed.

Make no mistake: Israel is our ally and friend. The administration needs to confirm that fact with its words and deeds.

Rep. Patrick Murphy (D-PA)

March 18th, 2010

America has no stronger friend and ally in the Middle East than the great state of Israel. We have stood united with Israel for over sixty years because we recognize her role as a beacon of democracy in an unstable region, and because she shares our most treasured values. The Obama Administration has time and again reaffirmed its commitment to working with Israel to find a peaceful resolution to a conflict that has raged for far too long.

Both the United States and Israel have reason to be upset about the events of the past week- and the rhetoric surrounding them. However, we must remember that we are allies first, and that cooler heads must ultimately prevail if we are to find a lasting peace for the region. The U.S. and Israel have shared a special relationship for more than six decades, and we have had our disagreements in the past. We must always remember that what binds us is infinitely more important than policy disagreements that may come between us at times. I look forward to our nations continuing to work together in good faith to prevent incidents such as this from occurring again. We've had American heroes like Michael Levin from Bucks County give his life in Israel's defense. We must ensure that his sacrifice for a safe and secure Israel was not made in vain. *(Press Release)*

Rep. Pete Olson (R-TX)

March 18th, 2010

Every Israeli government for the past four decades – both left and right – has approved settlement construction in East Jerusalem. The Administration is well aware of this and has no reason to be surprised or insulted by a construction decision made over a three year period by a regional planning committee.

The timing of the Israeli government's announcement during the visit of our Vice President was unfortunate and for that the Prime Minister offered an apology that the Vice President accepted. Sadly, it seems that in their unending attempt to appeal to the

fringe of the Arab world, the Administration has chosen to pick an unnecessary fight with one of our strongest allies in the world. This is unwarranted and must stop.

The Road Map of 2003 did not require that Israel halt construction in East Jerusalem. It did, however, require the Palestinians to quash incitement. Yet you would be hard pressed to find Israel recognized on a map in Palestinian text books. And just last week the Palestinians dedicated a public square in honor of Dalal Mughrabi – a Palestinian terrorist who murdered 13 Israeli children 32 years ago.

Yet I hear no public outcry of condemnation from the Administration aimed at Palestinian President Abbas regarding the continued incitement that is carried out on a daily basis. I join my colleagues in our strong stance against the Administration's unwarranted and disproportionate criticism of Israel. *(Press Release)*

Rep. Gary Peters (D-MI)

March 16th, 2010

“I agree that Israel's recent announcement was ill timed, but Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has said the same and apologized for that. It is now time to move on. Israel is our most trusted ally, Jerusalem is its capital, and the Administration's continued focus on this incident and its excessive criticisms of Israel over this incident is an unnecessary distraction from more pressing and important issues in the region such as the potential of a nuclear Iran.

“I hope that the Administration will end its unnecessary denunciations of Israel and will instead turn its focus to working with Congress to finally enact strong sanctions on Iran until it stops its pursuit of nuclear weapons.” *(Press Release)*

Rep. Tom Price (R-GA)

March 24th, 2010

“President Obama's been filmed shaking hands with Hugo Chavez and Muammar Gaddafi, yet he's stopped giving the Prime Minister of Israel the same courtesy,” said Chairman Price. “That's absurd. And it portends a troubling inclination by the President and his Administration to garner popularity abroad by distancing themselves from long-time allies. The White House's overreaction to the announcement of an Israeli housing project has put needless strain on the close relationship our two countries have long enjoyed. U.S. diplomacy with Israel and in the Middle East is ill-served by coddling nations that eschew freedom and punishing nations that embrace liberty.” *(Press Release)*

March 22nd, 2010

“The Obama administration must take this opportunity to seriously reexamine its contentious approach to Israel,” said Chairman Price. “Taken any further, it will have disastrous consequences for the U.S., Israel, and the entire Middle East. No good comes from aiming rhetorical barbs at one of our closest allies. Trying to delegitimize Israel does nothing to improve the prospects for lasting peace in the region. Our condemnation should fall on those who have pledged to destroy Israel while inciting violence against our homeland and the brave members of our military serving abroad.” *(Press Release)*

March 15th, 2010

“Even close allies will at times have their differences, but the Obama administration’s adversarial posture toward Israel defies understanding

“The combination of rebukes for Israel and conciliatory words for her enemies sends a very dangerous signal to the world. One has to wonder whether folks in the White House understand just how much damage this type of rhetoric is doing. Isolating Israel will make the goal of peace in the Middle East absolutely impossible. If members of the Obama administration believe otherwise, the likes of Hamas and Ahmadinejad will quickly disabuse them of their false notions. It’s time the White House stopped condemning our allies and started aggressively cracking down on those who sponsor terrorist groups and are ruthlessly pursuing nuclear weapons.” *(Floor Statement)*

Senator Arlen Specter (D-PA)

March 16th, 2010

“I have sought recognition to comment on the current controversy between the United States and Israel on the settlement issue.

“Before the current controversy between the United States and Israel escalates further, I suggest all parties cool the rhetoric, avoid public recriminations, determine exactly what happened and consider some fundamental questions.

“What are the facts? It has been reported that there are 1,600 new settlements in East Jerusalem in violation of Israeli commitments. Authoritative sources insist that the announcement by a mid-level official at the Ministry of the Interior only involved planning subject to judicial review with no groundbreaking for 3 years. Another report said U.S. officials extracted a secret promise from Prime Minister Netanyahu not to allow provocative steps in East Jerusalem. Is it true that the United States accepted the 10-month moratorium on settlements with caveats that excluded East Jerusalem in line with the insistence by Israeli officials dating back to Prime Minister Golda Meir that Jerusalem was under Israeli exclusive sovereignty?

“It is conceded that Prime Minister Netanyahu was blindsided by the announcement. It is further acknowledged that the Israeli Minister of the Interior is a member of the ultra-conservative Shaos party whose participation is essential to the continuation of the coalition government.

“These matters need to be thought through before making public pronouncements that could significantly damage the U.S.-Israeli relationship and give aid and comfort to the enemies of the Mideast peace process.

“The rock solid alliance between the United States and Israel has withstood significant disagreements for six decades. The mutual interests which bind these two countries together have always been stronger than the most substantial differences. The United States needs to respect Israeli security interests, understanding that Israel cannot lose a war and survive. The United States has many layers of defense to protect our security interests and survive.

“I suggest that if we all take a few deep breaths, think through the pending questions and reflect on the importance of maintaining U.S.-Israeli solidarity, we can weather this storm.” (*Floor Statement*)

Rep. Mike Quigley (D-IL)

March 16th, 2010

[T]he United States and Israel have long shared an important friendship. That friendship is rooted in close moral and strategy bonds built on common values, common interest, and common concerns. Today that friendship is being tested.

But we must not allow ourselves to be distracted from the concerns and goals that bring us together. The threat of a nuclear Iran is too great and the peace process is too important for us to spend more time engaging in critical rhetoric of our most important ally.

It is time to put aside the rhetoric and reaffirm our bonds with Israel. We must make it clear we are united in our opposition to a nuclear Iran. While no one gains by an escalation of tensions, we must make it clear that we value and support our relationship with the state and people of Israel.

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL)

March 15th, 2010

Israel is an indispensable ally and friend of the United States. U.S. condemnations of Israel and threats regarding our bilateral relationship undermine both our allies and the

peace process, while encouraging the enemies of America and Israel alike. I am also deeply concerned about the Administration's softer approaches towards the Palestinian Authority, Syria, and Iran, which are being carried out in conjunction with hard-line tactics against our key democratic ally, Israel. Our nation's security cannot afford a foreign policy which isolates our allies and moves towards appeasing enemies of the U.S. *(Press Release)*

Rep. Steve Rothman (D-NJ)

March 16th, 2010

The vital national security interests of the U.S. heavily depend on the survival and security of the State of Israel, just as Israel's vital national security is heavily dependent on its relationship with the U.S.

Most Americans, Israelis, and Palestinians understand that the present situation in the region is unacceptable and unsustainable. However, an insecure and unjust peace for Israel is no real peace for Israel at all.

The U.S. and Israel have been dear and committed friends, and have remained invaluable strategic allies since Israel's founding and recognition by the U.N. in 1948. Our countries have weathered temporary diplomatic storms and diversions of every nature and size for more than 60 years. I am confident that nothing has or will occur that will change that, especially given the stakes for both countries. *(Press Release)*

Rep. Mark Schauer (D-MI)

March 20th, 2010

Israel's announcement of plans to expand housing in East Jerusalem while the Vice President was meeting with the Israeli government temporarily side-tracked the peace process. Fortunately, it appears that the United States and Israel have put this incident behind them and are moving to advance the proximity talks being led by Senator Mitchell.

Make no mistake, the United States, has, and should continue to maintain, strong bonds with Israel as a very close strategic ally. U.S.-Israel security ties are in many ways closer today than they have ever been. We must never lose sight of this vital relationship. *(Press Release)*

Rep. Mark Souder (R-IN)

March 16th, 2010

But first let me start and say Israel has an historic importance to the world and to ourselves not just because of its history before the Diaspora and the tremendous history of the Jewish people and the Nation of Israel, but also it was a returning homeland for those after the Holocaust from around the world where they could gather again to the land from which they had been evicted.

Then it is important because it is a democratic bastion in the Middle East, where there are not democratic bastions. We are trying to see if Iraq can form a democracy, and Turkey is kind of a democracy as well. But Israel has been from its founding such a democracy, since its refounding in 1948. Not only that, but they are our best and really only consistent ally in the Middle East. But it is also because Israel is going to be of importance in future world history as well in many ways. In fact, not only should all Americans be concerned about what is happening in Israel, but many people have special concerns about the future of Israel and how the United States responds to Israel.

Therefore, it is extremely disturbing to watch the arrogance of this administration to bully our best ally. This article in the Jerusalem Post says this is the worst that the United States has treated Israel since 1975. The American leadership is mistakenly painting Israel into a corner is the thrust of this article. In one of the more sophisticated statements in it by Mr. Avner, who has written on the '75 crisis, he said, "If the United States wishes to advance a peace process, it must never paint Israel into a corner." And he points out that what is needed is constructive ambiguity.

Now, that is an interesting term because most of us like to be very forthright. And I would say that most people in Israel would like to be forthright most of the time. But when dealing with historic conflicts that have gone back to how the divisions first occurred in what I believe when God gave Israel its land, and divisions that have occurred since then, straightforwardness does not bring peace. Constructive ambiguity brings peace.

So when the United States takes sides in calling Ramat Shlomo a settlement, they chose words that were from the other side. That sends a message that becomes then very difficult for Israel. The question is, have we switched our positions or are we not as fully behind Israel?

Now, anybody who has ever visited there, reads about it, follows Israel, realizes that its enemies on all sides at least claim they want to destroy it. And from time to time they have had wars with which to attempt to destroy it. You don't have to be kind of really informed on international issues to realize that Iran is trying to develop a nuclear bomb. Why are they trying to develop a nuclear bomb? They want to destroy Israel from the face of the earth. It is their stated goal.

Now, the people in Israel may be divided on a lot of things and they have a lot of opinions in their country, but they are a tad worried about Iran. And they believe that the United States and the rest of the world don't seem to be taking it as seriously as they do.

Maybe because, for example, you can get a bomber over Jerusalem from Amman, Jordan, in a minute and a half. So they tend to be a little uncertain when there is some doubt. And so they have a deep concern. In this case they have a concern that we are all going to talk, talk, talk while they are going to be in danger because of a nuclear weapon. If we are going to address this, we need to stop giving the signals that we do not stand behind Israel, and we need to stand directly behind Israel and let the world know that is what our U.S. position is and do a little bit of constructive ambiguity. *(Floor Statement)*

Rep. Todd Tiahrt (R-KS)

March 13th, 2010

I call on President Obama to censure Secretary Clinton's rebuke of Prime Minister Netanyahu and reaffirm our longstanding friendship with Israel. Past U.S. administrations have recognized the unique relationship between Israel and the United States and made support for Israel a cornerstone of our foreign policy. The United States has a moral and strategic obligation to support this beacon of democracy in the Middle East.

For the Obama administration to question the internal decisions of one of our closest allies is both disrespectful and unhelpful. Prime Minister Netanyahu has the authority and responsibility to care for the people of Israel, and it is inappropriate for Secretary Clinton to openly question these decisions. I hope her statements do not weaken the vital U.S.-Israel relationship.

Any attempt to cut or restrict military aid to Israel by the administration would severely damage both U.S. and Israeli security. And any effort to cut aid would lead to fierce resistance in Congress. *(Press Release)*

Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-NY)

March 16th, 2010

The appropriate response was a shake of the head – not a temper tantrum. Israel is a sovereign nation and an ally, not a punching bag. Enough already. *(Press Statement)*

Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL)

March 18th, 2010

Vice President Biden went to Israel to underscore the strength of the U.S.-Israel relationship, to mark the beginning of the new round of proximity talks, and to make it

abundantly clear that preventing a nuclear-armed Iran is one of our top priorities. Unfortunately, the announcement by the Israeli Interior Ministry of a plan to build 1,600 housing units in Ramat Shlomo disrupted these goals, and even with Prime Minister Netanyahu's apology, was ill-timed and disappointing.

That being said, I strongly believe that it is now time to move past this recent exchange and tone down the rhetoric and criticism of Israel. Today Israel finds itself yet again under missile attack from her enemies and we cannot allow this past week's controversy to distract us from the more important issues at hand.

Peace is complex for all parties involved and must be approached from a broader context. Israel, our most stalwart ally, has made numerous concessions over decades to move the peace process forward. Nonetheless, the Jewish State still endures terrible emotional and economic hardship from terrorist cowards and hostile states such as Iran, determined to injure and destroy innocent lives.

Excessively rehashing this incident is to our own and the world's detriment. The more we continue to dwell on it, the more time will pass in which Iran moves forward in its attempt to acquire a nuclear weapon, the false and misleading Goldstone Report continues to gain traction, and Hamas continues to do all that it can to block any chance for peace. These are serious global issues that deserve our unfettered attention, concern, and energy. We must not allow a momentary, inadvertent lapse in judgment to drive a wedge between close allies and friends, the U.S. and Israel. I am confident that Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Obama will continue to work hand in hand to alleviate these continued threats. As the Obama Administration has recently reiterated, our bond with Israel is and will continue to be unbreakable. *(Press Release)*

Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN)

March 23rd, 2010

Today, I had the privilege of welcoming the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, for his second visit to the United States Capitol. The American people consider Israel our most cherished ally and we her closest friend and guardian. As we met, Israel lives under the shadow of a threatening neighbor seeking nuclear weapons but, remarkably, this administration seems intent on focusing on a controversy over construction in undisputed areas of Jerusalem instead of the threat of a nuclear Iran. As I just told the Prime Minister, I never thought I'd live to see the day that an American administration would denounce the State of Israel for rebuilding Jerusalem. If the world knows nothing else, let it know this: America stands with Israel.

As the President meets with Prime Minister Netanyahu today, I urge the President to stop all this talk about settlements in Jerusalem and start focusing on isolating a threatening and menacing and rising nuclear Iran. The American people and the American Congress in both parties support the State of Israel. *(Floor Statement)*

Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN), Rep. Eric Cantor (R-VA), Rep. Thaddeus McCotter (R-MI), Rep. David Dreier (R-CA), Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA), Rep. Pete Sessions (R-TX), Rep. John Carter (R-TX), Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), Rep. Greg Walden (R-OR)

March 17, 2010

Dear President Obama,

As strong supporters of Israel and proponents of lasting peace in the Middle East, we are dismayed at remarks made this past weekend from high-level officials in your Administration admonishing the Israeli government.

Despite Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's admission that the ill-timed announcement of the approval of a residential development was "regrettable," it is our understanding that at your direction, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton chastised the Prime Minister on the phone and then in public. Furthermore, your Senior Advisor, David Axelrod, chose to excoriate Israel on national television. Your Administration's decision to escalate this issue is extremely harmful to US-Israeli relations, which, according to Israeli Ambassador Michael Oren, are now at a 35-year low.

While your Administration clamors over the announcement of a proposed residential development years away from completion, Iran continues to develop its nuclear weapons capability and Hamas and Hezbollah rearm and reenergize. Remarks made by your Cabinet and advisors embolden Israel's enemies — who are wholly committed to destroying the Jewish State — and undermine the critical relationship we have with our strongest ally for democracy and peace in the Middle East.

Israel has demonstrated its willingness to advance the peace process — even when its concessions have led to decreased security. When Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, the region became a haven for Hamas and led to repeated rocket and mortar attacks on Israeli cities. It is therefore unrealistic for you to request that Israel continue to make significant confidence building gestures while putting no real pressure upon the instigators of armed violence.

Instead of continuing to make unrealistic demands of Israel, we encourage you and your Administration to address the real issues threatening stability in the region. We respectfully request that you publically express the United States' unwavering support for Israel, acknowledge its status as a willing partner in the peace process, and reiterate its sovereign right to defend itself against attacks from those who seek its destruction.

Sincerely,

Congressman John Boehner

Congressman Mike Pence
Congressman Eric Cantor
Congressman Thaddeus McCotter
Congressman David Drier
Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Congressman Pete Sessions
Congressman John Carter
Congressman Kevin McCarthy
Congressman Greg Walden