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AIPAC APPLAUDS BIPARTISAN CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS SUPPORTING ISRAEL'S SELF-DEFENSE

AIPAC again applauds both Democratic and Republican congressional leaders who continue to stand firmly in support of Israel's quest for peace and back the Jewish state's right to defend its citizens from the ongoing attacks of the Iranian-backed terrorist group Hamas.

Echoing the strong statement by President Bush in his radio address this weekend, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Senate Majority Whip Dick Durban (D-IL), appearing on the Sunday talk shows this weekend, all expressed staunch support for Israel and their effort to defend against Hamas terrorists in Gaza.

Like President-elect Obama said in Sderot last summer, and his top advisor David Axelrod reiterated last week, "If somebody was sending rockets into my house, where my two daughters sleep at night, I'm going to do everything in my power to stop that. And I would expect Israelis to do the same thing."

Below are the transcripts of Leaders Reid and McConnell from this weekend.

To view an updated compilation of statements of support by members of Congress, including Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and House Republican Leader John Boehner, advisors to President-elect Obama, the Bush administration and elected officials across the country, [click here](#).

To view AIPAC's previous statements [click here](#), and for additional background on Israel's effort to defend their citizens and degrade Hamas, visit www.aipac.org.

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Sen. Reid on NBC's Meet the Press

MR. GREGORY: Let me ask you about the ground invasion into Gaza. Do you think on the part of this Israeli-- of the Israelis this was offensive or defensive?

SEN. REID: I spoke to Prime Minister Olmert a couple of days ago. He indicated that they would do the ground activities. Let's understand the background. For eight years they've been firing rockets into Israel. They've become more intense the last few months. Israelis have been killed, maimed and injured. Sometimes more than 200 a day coming into Israel. If this were going on in the United States from Vancouver, Canada, into Seattle, would we react? Course we do. We would have to. I think what the Israelis are doing is very important. I think this terrorist organization, Hamas, has got to be put away. They've got to come to their senses. The Fatah group,

which is--makes up part of Palestinian group, has a peace arrangement with Israel. Hamas should do the same.

MR. GREGORY: And they're in power in the West Bank.

SEN. REID: That's right. And, and, and Israel, for--since 1967, controlled Gaza. They gave it to the Palestinians as a gesture of peace. And all they got are a bunch of rockets in return.

MR. GREGORY: So you think that Israel ought to move forward and try to remove Hamas from power?

SEN. REID: They have to. I, I'm not concerned about removing Hamas from power, I'm concerned about stopping the rocket fire and the mortar fire into Israel. That is the key, and that's what Israel's up to according to the prime minister.

MR. GREGORY: Should there be an immediate cease-fire?

SEN. REID: If the Hamas organization will agree and there is some degree of certainty that they will follow through. They, in the past, have simply not lived up to what they said they would do. If there's a way of enforcing this cease-fire, then yes. Otherwise, Israel has to continue till they stop the rockets and mortars coming into Israel, maiming, injuring...

MR. GREGORY: Right.

SEN. REID: ...and killing Israelis.

MR. GREGORY: So you, you're in sync with the Bush administration on this point?

SEN. REID: Yes, I am.

Sen. Durbin on ABC's This Week

STEPHANOPOULOS: Now for reaction here in the United States, I am joined by the number-two Democrat in the Senate, Senator Dick Durbin of Illinois, the senior senator of Illinois.

Good morning, Senator. Let me get your reaction right away to President Peres. You clearly saw him, heard him this morning, no cease-fire, no withdrawal now. Is that wise?

DURBIN: Well, it's understandable. The Israeli people, of course, have been the victims of the terrorist attacks by these Hamas rockets, which are now capable of longer ranges and more damage and bloodshed, and the Israelis want to bring an end to this.

When they left the Gaza strip, it was to try to bring peace to this area, return it to the hands of the Palestinians. And sadly, the Palestinian people have been victimized by incompetent and corrupt leadership, and at this point in time, I think the Israelis have said we have to put an end to these attacks from Gaza into Israel.

A cease-fire, I hope, occurs quickly. I hope it is of a permanent and verifiable nature. But it's understandable. Israel has watched as these rockets have been launched from Gaza time and again, killing innocent people in their territory.

Sen. McConnell on ABC's This Week

STEPHANOPOULOS: Finally, we're just about out of time, but do you agree with Senator Durbin that Israel's ground operation now in Gaza is understandable?

MCCONNELL: Absolutely. Hamas is a terrorist organization. Imagine in this country if somebody from a neighboring country were lobbing shells at our population. We'd do exactly the same thing. I think the Israelis are doing the only thing they can possibly do to defend their population.