

# ALERT

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## Congressional Statements on the Gaza Flotilla Incident

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## **Vice President Joe Biden**

*June 2, 2010*

**Charlie Rose:** Prime Minister Netanyahu was scheduled to come to Washington. He did not. He went back to Israel. There is a blockade. Should they end the blockade in lieu of what's happened here?

**Joe Biden:** I think Israel has an absolute right to deal with its security interest. I put all this back on two things: one, Hamas, and, two, Israel's need to be more generous relative to the Palestinian people who are in trouble in Gaza. Let me explain that very briefly. Sometimes, because we deal so much at least which you know so much about, we have to remember how we got here.

Remember, it was Ehud Barak who decided to pull all Iraqi troops -- I mean, excuse me, all Iraqi -- all Israeli troops out of Gaza. He did that back in '06. Then there was an election, an election for their parliament with a president named Mahmoud Abbas who in fact was the successor of Arafat in the Fatah. That produced a majority of members of the parliament, which was the West Bank and Gaza, of Hamas. The international community, the so-called Quartet; the United States, Europe, Russia, and the U.N., said, "Look, in order for you to be part of that government, you have to agree to four conditions. One, you'll abide by previous agreements that have been made by the government of -- by the Palestinians. Two, you are going to renounce terror. Three, you're going to recognize Israel, and basically that you have to accept" -- and here's what happened. They then got in a fight among themselves. They physically took over by force of arms, killed members of the existing government, exile them, took over and started firing rockets into Israel. Over 3,000 went in last year. And as we put pressure, and the world put pressure on Israel to let material go into Gaza to help those people who are suffering, the ordinary Palestinians there, what happened? Hamas would confiscate it, put it in a warehouse, sell it, they were -- so the problem is this would end tomorrow if Hamas agreed to form a government with the Palestinian Authority on the conditions the international community has set up. And so I mean again, look, you can argue whether Israel should have dropped people onto that ship or not and the -- but the truth of the matter is, Israel has a right to know -- they're at war with Hamas -- has a right to know whether or not arms are being smuggled in. And up to now, Charlie, what's happened? They've said, "Here you go. You're in the Mediterranean. This ship -- if you divert slightly north you can unload it and we'll get the stuff into Gaza." So what's the big deal here? What's the big deal of insisting it go straight to Gaza? Well, it's legitimate for Israel to say, "I don't know what's on that ship. These guys are dropping eight -- 3,000 rockets on my people." Now, the one thing we have to do is not forget the plight of these Palestinians there, not Hamas, the -- they're in bad shape. So we have put as much pressure and as much cajoling on Israel as we can to allow them to get building materials in, glass --

**Charlie Rose:** That's what they're trying to bring in, building materials.

**Joe Biden:** Yes, we know that, but they could have easily brought it in here and we'd get it through. And so now the question is what do we do? Well, we had made it clear, the President of the United States has spoken three times, yesterday with Bibi, or the day before yesterday, he's spoken once yesterday with a guy that I have spent a fair amount of time with, with Prime Minister Erdogan in Turkey; the Turks, we passed a resolution in the U.N. saying we need a transparent and open investigation of what happened. It looks like things are --

**Charlie Rose:** International investigation --

**Joe Biden:** Well, an investigation run by the Israelis, but we're open to international participation, just like the investigation run on the sunken sub in -- off the coast of Korea. That was run by South Korea, but the international community joined in that investigation. And so that is very possible here as well. I might add by the way for all those who say the Israelis, you know, you know, you can't trust them, the Israeli Supreme Court ruled today that every one of the people on those ships had to be released immediately, immediately.

**Charlie Rose:** So what's the --

**Joe Biden:** It's a rule of law. It works.

**Charlie Rose:** I said it was my last question, so I'll make it my last question then. So are you saying that the relationship between Israel and the United States is okay, that there are --

**Joe Biden:** It's more than okay. Look, we always have had disagreements tactically with the Israeli government, but when I was in Israel, Bibi Netanyahu and I held a press conference before all the flap about a new settlement, etc, and --

**Charlie Rose:** Right, yeah, yeah. Exactly, oh, the President got very upset about that because of what he did while you were in the country. I mean, that was the --

**Joe Biden:** That's true but here's the point. We stood there at that press conference I'm making a major speech at the University of Tel Aviv, major meaning laying out U.S. policy, and Bibi pointed out that no administration in history has been as up-front and supportive of Israel's security as this administration. We've done everything from provide missile defense. We've made sure they've maintained their qualitative edge. There's a new program they call Iron Dome that we're helping fund for them to be able to protect themselves. We have joint maneuvers. They've never been closer on the strategic side with Israel than today.

**Charlie Rose:** Ehud Barak said that to me on a program.

**Joe Biden:** And that's literally true. Now, do we have disagreements on the tactical way in which this government acts and some of the comments that some of the ministers of this government, the things that they say and make that we think are counter-productive, yeah, but we always have. I go all the way back to Golda Meir -- oh, God, I'm getting old -- but literally, in '73 I met with Golda Meir. We've always had some tactical problems.

**Charlie Rose:** I have to leave with this story -- I could do this for a long time -- which you tell better than I do. Golda Meir says we have something; we have something that they don't have, which was...?

**Joe Biden:** I just spent a long time with Golda Meir and just after the Six-Day War and before the Yom Kippur War, just days before. And she was flipping maps on her desk there and, you know, showing me this and that and we're surrounded by and everything and I was getting very depressed. And there was a guy sitting next to me who was her aide and his name was Rabin, a future prime minister. He was then a general. And all of a sudden she said, "Would you like a photo opportunity?" And I thought, I'm 30 years old, "Yes, ma'am." And those double doors open and we walk out and are standing there and they're clicking pictures and I guess I must have looked really worried because of the picture she painted. She looked at me, she said, while looking at the camera, you know, we're doing this photo shot, she said, "Senator, why do you look so worried?" I said, "My God, Madame Prime Minister, I mean, the picture you drew." She said, "Oh," she said, "Don't worry, Senator. We have a secret weapon in our conflict with the Arabs." And I said, I turned like she was going to tell me some secret, I looked at her and said,

“Madame Prime Minister, what’s that?” She said, “We have nowhere else to go.” (*Interview with Charlie Rose*)

**Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-NY)**

June 1, 2010

I strongly support Israel’s right to defend itself, and the right of Israel’s naval commandos, who were executing a legal mission, to defend themselves by using force when they were brutally attacked. I strongly condemn the action of those who assaulted the Israeli troops and made the use of violence by Israeli troops necessary in self-defense. The loss of life is regrettable, but wholly the fault and responsibility of the organizers of the effort to break through Israel and Egypt’s legitimate closure of terrorist-controlled Gaza.

If the true intent of the people on the boat was humanitarian, their goods could easily and readily have been delivered to Gaza through the Israeli port of Ashdod, as has been the result of other ships intercepted while trying to break the blockade. Clearly, their intent was cynical, and political; to provoke a confrontation with Israel for the benefit of Hamas and as part of the international effort to delegitimize Israel’s existence.

Israel is confronted in Gaza by a de facto authority, Hamas, a violent, terroristic and extermination-minded enemy. The naval blockade and the closure of access points into Israel from Gaza are entirely justified, legal, and necessary to preserve Israeli lives and to minimize the smuggling of more and more powerful arms into Gaza to be used against Israeli civilians.

Instead of spastically and outrageously attacking Israel, the international community should be focused on the true villain in this drama, Hamas, which if it cared about the people of Gaza in even the slightest measure, could end the blockade and closure within hours. How?

Very simply, by publicly and emphatically accepting the conditions established by the United Nations, the Russian Federation, the European Union and the United States (“The Quartet”) which calls on Hamas to accept Israel’s right to exist; to reject the use of violence against Israel; and to adhere to all the prior political commitments made by the PLO and the Palestinian Authority.

The fact of the matter is this: the tragic events that occurred over the weekend are the responsibility of Hamas, not Israel. Failure to recognize the moral responsibility of Hamas for these events is possible only by confusing cause with effect, or by holding Israel to an unacceptable double standard. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. John Adler (D-NJ)**

June 2, 2010

The recent loss of life off the coast of Gaza is troubling, but it is critical that we gain a comprehensive understanding of the events before jumping to conclusions

The bond between the United States and Israel remains unshakable. For sixty-two years, our two nations have shared a deep commitment to democracy and lasting peace in the Mid-East. In a part of the world recognized for its conflict, Israel should retain its right to protect itself. The threats of a nuclear Iran and terrorism should remain a main focus of U.S. diplomatic efforts.

*(Press Release)*

**Rep. Robert Andrews (D-NJ)**

June 22, 2010

Madam Speaker, I rise today to strongly support the right of Israel to act in self-defense, which requires the inspection of cargo going into area controlled by the terrorist organization Hamas surrounding the Gaza territory. The inspections are vital because Hamas has smuggled in thousands of rockets to attack and terrorize Israeli civilians. Hamas has clearly stated its goal is the destruction of the State of Israel and the leaders of the Gaza flotilla, particularly those on the Mavi Marmara, set out to intentionally use force to confront the blockade. If the blockade were to be broken, it would be impossible to tell which vessels were carrying humanitarian supplies and which were carrying deadly rockets.

As a sovereign nation, Israel has the right to protect its people from the threat of terrorism. Israel warned the boats that they were in violation of a lawful blockade and offered them an alternative where the humanitarian aid would be off-loaded and delivered to Gaza. The flotilla, however, insisted on attempting to circumvent the blockade because their primary motivation was confrontation.

Israel is a long-standing democratic ally of the United States. We must stand with Israel and defend their right to defend the Israeli people *(Congressional Record)*

**Rep. Joe Barton (R-TX)**

June 1, 2010

Israel is a unique outpost for democracy in the Middle East and a longtime, valuable friend to the United States. Reports indicate that the ship involved in this incident was intent on provoking a confrontation and disregarded numerous requests to stop. I fully support the Israeli people's right to maintain secure borders on land and a legal blockade at sea so that terrorists in Gaza are denied the weapons they will use to kill and wound innocent Israelis. Until a viable, peaceful

Palestinian state comes into being and its people are capable of living side by side with Israel as good neighbors, the U.S. should back Israel's right to defend its people using this blockade.  
(*Press Release*)

**Rep. Shelley Berkley (D-NV)**

June 14, 2010

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in solidarity with the State of Israel and all peace-loving nations who seek to defend their citizens and put an end to terrorism. Unfortunately, we live in an age when those simple goals are under threat and we face enemies who will use any means at their disposal to indiscriminately kill men, women and children who stand in their way.

As the world knows, on May 31, the Israeli navy stopped a flotilla of six ships headed toward the Gaza Strip. These ships were flying under Turkish flags and claimed to be carrying tons of humanitarian aid for the people of Gaza. However, the real goal of these so-called "peace activists" was--in their own words--to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza and allow Hamas to import whatever they want to Gaza, including weapons. But these activists should remember that Hamas can end the blockade at any moment by recognizing Israel's right to exist, ending the violence and releasing Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, who has been held by Hamas without access to the Red Cross for four years.

When the Israeli navy attempted to commandeer the boats and bring them to Israeli ports for inspection, most of the passengers aboard the boats cooperated and used only non-violent, passive resistance to impede the Israeli efforts. However, one of the boats was filled with members of an Islamist group with connections to Hamas and Hezbollah, called IHH (Insani Yardim Vakfi). These "peace activists" immediately attacked the Israeli soldiers with knives, metal bars, wrenches, clubs and rocks. The soldiers' lives were clearly at risk and they fired back to quell the fighting, killing nine.

It is important to point out that these IHH members were not serving a humanitarian mission. If that were the case, they would have cooperated with the Israelis and the Egyptians in order to expedite the arrival of their cargo. Prior to the incident, Israel offered to have the aid delivered to an Israeli port for inspection and delivery to Gaza. There was even a similar Egyptian offer, but the activists rejected both of those offers. As the organizers themselves said, this operation was about more than just delivering aid, but rather about ending the Israeli blockade of Gaza.

I also reject the entire premise that there is any need for humanitarian supplies in Gaza. In 2009, more than 738,000 tons of food and supplies entered Gaza. The total amount of aid transferred from Israel to Gaza in 2009 increased by 180 percent, compared to the amount transferred in 2008. From January 1, 2010 through May 8, 2010, 230,690 tons of humanitarian aid was transferred from Israel into Gaza through the Israel -Gaza goods crossings. This included medical supplies, milk powder and baby food, meat, chicken, fish, grains, legumes, oil, flour, salt, sugar, fresh vegetables and dairy products as well as animal feed, hygiene products and clothes. That does not sound like a humanitarian crisis to me.

Hamas and its allies are simply using Israel's legal blockade of Gaza as a propaganda tool to undermine international support for the State of Israel. But if it weren't for this blockade, Hamas could import unlimited amounts of weaponry and rockets, which they would turn against Israeli civilians, as they have done in the past. If the naval blockade were broken, as the activists seek, every man, woman and child in Israel would be at risk from Iranian and Syrian missiles.

Unfortunately, efforts are now underway to unfairly paint Israel as the aggressor in this incident, when they were simply acting to defend their citizens. Calls are mounting for an international investigation like the biased and deeply-flawed Goldstone Report, which accused Israel of war crimes in its self-defensive Operation Cast Lead. I join Israel in rejecting these calls. Israel, a strong democracy and America's close ally, is perfectly capable of conducting a fair, credible investigation that meets international standards.

I find it even more galling that such calls are now being made, given the silence following North Korea's horrific attack on a South Korean ship that killed 46 sailors. It is time the world focused on such real threats to peace, while recognizing Israel's right to defend its civilian population against persistent terrorist threats.

I am also deeply disturbed by Turkey's recent actions and statements regarding Israel and the Palestinians. Their irresponsible support for this so-called "aid" flotilla actually sought to bolster the Hamas terrorists in Gaza who have pledged to destroy Israel at any cost. By seeking an end to the blockade, Turkey is trying to legitimize a terrorist group that targets civilians and harms any chance for peace. As I've said, Turkey--and the world--should remember that Hamas can end the blockade at any moment by recognizing Israel's right to exist, ending the violence and releasing Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, who has been held by Hamas without access to the Red Cross for 4 years.

Meanwhile, Turkey's actions have undermined the moderate Palestinians who have been building institutions, ending corruption and cracking down on violent extremists. If there is a chance for peace in the region, it does not come from the extremist elements Turkey is supporting.

And Turkey is hardly in a position to criticize Israel. The world community should remember that Turkey has been illegally occupying the northern part of Cyprus--a sovereign nation--for over three decades, despite international calls to remove its troops. They have also steadfastly refused to recognize the Armenian Genocide and have systematically denied basic religious rights to the Greek Orthodox Patriarch in Istanbul. With their recent actions, Turkey is once again showing its true colors, as a supporter of terrorists, and not a champion of peacemaking.

Mr. Speaker, I am deeply disturbed by the recent events and fear that the world is once again blaming the victim. Israel must be allowed to defend itself--for its own sake, for ours, and for the sake of all people around the world who are under threat of terror. We must not be duped into believing that these Hamas-sympathizers are somehow acting in the name of peace. Nothing could be further from the truth. We must take a united stand for democracy, for the rule of law, and for peace. (*Congressional Record*)

June 8, 2010

“I join Israel in rejecting calls for an international investigation of the recent events related to Gaza. Israel, a strong democracy and America’s close ally, is perfectly capable of conducting a fair, credible investigation that meets international standards.

“The last time the UN investigated the conflict between Israel and Hamas, it produced the biased, anti-Israel Goldstone Report. This one-sided document accused Israel of war crimes, when its actions were in defense of innocent families facing a constant barrage of deadly Hamas missile attacks. Given this history, we have no reason to believe the UN would produce anything more balanced this time around.

“I find it even more galling that such calls are now being made, given the silence following North Korea’s horrific attack on a South Korean ship that killed 46 sailors. It is time the world focused on such real threats to peace, while recognizing Israel’s right to defend its civilian population against persistent terrorist threats.” (*Press Release*)

June 2, 2010

I am deeply concerned about the recent incident involving attempts by a flotilla to break an Israeli blockade of Gaza and I regret the tragic loss of life that followed this provocation.

Unfortunately, efforts are now underway to unfairly paint Israel as the aggressor in this incident. These assertions come even as mounting evidence points to passengers on the vessel, not Israeli forces, as the instigators of violence.

Israel’s blockade of Gaza is legal under international law. This policy is in place to ensure that weaponry and rockets do not reach Hamas, a risk to Israeli families that our democratic ally cannot -- and will not -- allow.

Israel acted to avoid violence by intercepting these boats at sea and offered to bring all aid to Israeli ports for inspection and delivery to Gaza. This offer was flatly rejected, as was a similar invitation to deliver aid made by Egypt that was also refused.

The government of Israel repeatedly warned flotilla organizers that the boats would be intercepted before reaching Gaza. On five of the six boats, the Israelis were met peacefully and calmly by the passengers, without incident. This demonstrates Israeli personnel had no intention to use force and only did so in self-defense.

But these activists attempting to illegally break the blockade were not solely intent on delivering humanitarian aid to Gaza. They made it clear before their operation ever began that they were seeking conflict with Israel and to break the blockade. Mounting evidence now points to the presence of passengers linked to Hamas on the sixth boat, who attacked Israeli soldiers without provocation.

In the aftermath of this incident, I call on the world community to stand with Israel against further illegal provocation aimed at Israeli forces pledged to defend innocent lives against terrorist threats. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Sanford Bishop (D-GA)**

June 9, 2010

Mr. Speaker, the long-standing conflict in the Middle East unfortunately has added a new and tragic event to its history. I deeply regret the loss of life that occurred on May 31, 2010 when the Israel Defense Force intercepted the flotilla of six ships that sailed from Turkey to Gaza. Events went horribly awry when nine people died.

I want to repeat my support for the State of Israel and its right to defend itself from terrorist attacks in the strongest terms possible. Since 2005, when Israel disengaged from Gaza, over 10,000 rockets have been fired on the Jewish State, endangering the lives of thousands of civilians. Israel's naval blockade of Gaza has helped to ensure that the supply of munitions and weapons to Hamas, which has controlled the Gaza Strip since 2007, is kept to the lowest extent possible. The flotilla incident demonstrates once again that increased pressure must be placed on Hamas to recognize Israel's right to exist and to renounce terror. In addition, progress must be made in resolving the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians so that they can live in peace and security. (*Congressional Record*)

**Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis (R-FL)**

June 8, 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. It is apparent that Hamas has no interest in attaining peace with Israel. Extraordinary restraint has been employed by Israel in the face of the constant blitz of rockets that have rained down upon the Israeli civilian population. No other country in the world would have endured repeated rocket attacks for years before asserting its right to defend life and property. Not only does Israel have to contend with the usual suspects who continue to seek her demise such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and the illegal Iranian regime, but now Israel has to endure hostility from her so-called ally, Turkey.

In an effort to avoid a confrontation, Israel had repeatedly pled with Turkey to redirect the flotilla to Israel's beautiful port city of Ashdod, a sister city of Tampa. At Ashdod the flotilla could be inspected and any humanitarian materials would be delivered by U.N. relief workers through legitimate border crossings to Gaza. However, neither Turkey nor the alleged peace activists seemed interested in a diplomatic manner by which to provide aid to Gazans. Their agenda was anything but humanitarian. Turkey's provocation of Israel by deliberately allowing the flotilla to set sail, in contravention of international law, and violate a naval blockade is unacceptable. While there was an unfortunate loss of life, the radicals aboard the flotilla were not

interested in the wellbeing of Palestinians. The radicals' primary aim and stated intent was to break the blockade. The result would be unchecked bombs and weapons flowing from Iran to Hamas, a terrorist organization committed to Israel's destruction.

As a member of the House Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, I call upon my colleagues and the Obama Administration to support Israel's right to defend herself despite the typical cacophony of international entities who are always first to condemn Israel and quick to lend support to enemies of freedom. (*Office of Rep. Gus Bilirakis*)

### **Republican Leader John Boehner (R-OH)**

June 3, 2010

"... Israel has every right to defend itself against terrorists which threaten its very survival. The United States has no closer friend than Israel, and the American people stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the Israelis. Unfortunately, while the international community has spent the past week condemning the Israelis, Iran has moved one step closer to building a nuclear bomb. The Obama Administration owes the American people and our allies around the world a comprehensive strategy designed to stop Iran from developing a nuclear capability, not to simply contain Iran once it already has one. ...." ([Blog Post](#))

### **Rep. John Boozman (R-AR)**

June 2, 2010

I am deeply saddened by the loss of life and injury that has resulted from this attempted running of Israel's legitimate blockade on Gaza. Israel has the right to defend itself against attacks by terrorist organizations by any means necessary in order to protect its citizens.

It is important to note that this blockade does not prevent the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza, but requires that it be channeled through the Israeli authorities. This provides Israel with the ability to ensure that no weapons or other material support for ongoing terrorist operations in Gaza are being smuggled in with aid."

While this latest incident serves as a reminder that tensions are rising in the Middle East, in no way should it change the support we give to our longtime and critically strategic ally. We cannot let this tragic incident and the distortions from Israel's critics stand in the way of Israel's right to ensure the safety and security of its land and people. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Dan Boren (D-OK)**

*June 10, 2010*

Madam Speaker, in the last few weeks, the right of Israel to defend itself against threats to ensure its security has come under attack.

Last month, Israel Defense Forces intercepted a flotilla of vessels in the Mediterranean Sea manned by protestors whose aim was to provoke a response from Israel and prompt international disapproval of Israel's blockade of the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip.

During this so-called "flotilla incident," Israeli forces boarded the ships to search for weapons. They were attacked and subsequently used force to protect themselves. The Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation, which organized the flotilla, has known ties to Hamas and other terrorist groups.

Madam Speaker, in the aftermath of this event, Israel has been unfairly and wrongly condemned for its actions. As criticism of Israel over this incident escalates, and investigations into the matter proceed, we must not forget who really is under attack--Israel.

Israel is persistently targeted for violence by Hamas and other military groups in the region. Hamas, which is officially designated by the United States as a terrorist group, is fervently avowed to the destruction of Israel.

Israel inspects cargo bound for Gaza to stem the flow of arms and explosives to Hamas and other militant organizations there who want to attack it. There is a good reason for this policy: Since Israeli forces withdrew from Gaza, Hamas has fired more than 7,000 rockets and mortar shells into Israel.

The foremost responsibility of government is to protect the safety of its citizens. Many nations--including the United States--reserve the right to confront threats to their security, sometimes preemptively to eliminate imminent danger.

Blocking the movement of weapons by sea into Gaza prevents Hamas and other militant groups from having the means to use violence against Israel to achieve their desired aims, chief among them the annihilation of Israel.

Madam Speaker, it is imperative that members of this chamber give due attention to the circumstantial evidence and historical facts surrounding the flotilla incident.

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 common interests.

For these reasons, we must remain resolutely committed to uphold Israel's right to self-defense.

I urge my fellow colleagues also to voice their support for Israel on this important issue.  
*(Congressional Record)*

**Rep. Kevin Brady (D-TX)**

June 11, 2010

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu will soon be receiving a letter of support from the House Republican Study Committee. As a member of this important group, I signed the letter because I believe the Israeli people and their government have a right and a responsibility to ensure the safety of their democratic nation.

While I still hope that peace eventually comes to this volatile part of our world, Israel is stopping ships for one reason -- to prevent an influx of weapons to an Hamas-controlled area. As long as our ally, Israel, is forced to justify its existence, the Israeli government must be allowed to take what steps are to prevent weapons from reaching the hands of terrorists who seek nothing less than complete annihilation of the Jewish state.

While taking a harsh line with our ally Israel over the blockade, our President this week announced that another \$400 million of your tax dollars would be heading to the Palestinian-controlled West Bank and Gaza Strip. This announcement followed a White House Meeting between President Obama and Palestinian Authority President Abbas. *(Office of Rep. Kevin Brady)*

**Rep. Robert Brady (D-PA)**

June 11, 2010

“There are three things we can say with certainty. First, the State of Israel has the absolute right to exist and to defend itself. Secondly, all people in the region have a right to live in peace and prosperity. Finally, the sovereignty and safety of Israel are fundamental to the security of United States. We will never abandon Israel or deny her right to defend herself.” *(Office of Rep. Robert Brady)*

**Rep. Paul Broun (R-GA)**

June 15, 2010

Mr. Speaker, in Genesis, chapter 12, verses 1 through 3, God tells Abraham that he will bless the nation that blesses his people, and curse the nation who curses his people.

God says in that verse, starting at verse 1, The Lord had said to Abraham, “Leave your country, your people, and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into

a great nation, and I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I will curse. And all people's on Earth will be blessed through you."

Mr. Speaker, God gave the land in Israel to the Israelites, to the Jewish people. They're a sovereign nation. They have a sovereign right to protect their borders, to protect their lives, to protect their country, to protect their valid claim to the land that God gave them.

Mr. Speaker, our Nation has supported Israel since it was reestablished in 1947 by an act of the United Nations. This country has supported Israel ever since then. We've been blessed as a Nation since then. But I'm very fearful that this administration is turning its back upon Israel. I'm very fearful that God's blessing that has been on this land, as promised in Genesis, chapter 12, verses 1 through 3, will cease if we cease supporting the nation of Israel.

Israel is a sovereign nation that's protecting itself. It has an absolute right to do so. Mr. Speaker, if we turn our back upon Israel, as I'm fearful that we're doing as a Nation through this administration, not only will we cease to have God's blessings, but we will also start receiving the curses from God that he promised in Genesis, chapter 12.

Mr. Speaker, if we don't support Israel, and just by being silent, just by turning our back upon Israel, then we're supporting Hamas. We're supporting Hezbollah. We're supporting Iran. President Ahmadinejad has stressed over and over again that he wants to annihilate Israel from the face of the Earth. We have to support Israel, Mr. Speaker. The consequences for our Nation are too dire not to.

God has put his blessings upon this country. And I think a big part of that is because this country was founded on the Judeo-Christian principles that have made this country so powerful, so rich, and so successful as a political experiment. But that blessing will cease if we ever turn our back upon Israel. We must not. We cannot. America must support Israel. Our administration must support Israel. And I call upon our country to continue to do so. (*Congressional Record*)

**Sen. Scott Brown (R-MA)**

*June 6, 2010*

"I was disappointed that, after the unfortunate loss of life on the sea outside Gaza, many rushed to condemn Israel before the facts of this situation became clear. Many conveniently ignored the fact that Israel is at war. Each and every day thousands of its innocent men, women and children face the threat of lethal rocket attacks out of Gaza. Some of the usual critics of Israel have used recent events to question the strong relationship between our countries. They clearly do not understand what makes these two countries special and unique sources of hope to the world.

"I cannot emphasize this point enough: Israel is not a liability to the United States. Israel is unquestionably a strategic asset to America. Indeed, there is no greater U.S. ally in the critical area of the Middle East and perhaps no better strategic partnership in the world.

“Let’s remember - Israel is our ally. Israel is a democracy. Hamas is a terrorist group with clear and genuine intentions of destroying Israel’s way of life.” ([Speech to AIPAC Dinner](#))

**Rep. Vern Buchanan (R-FL)**

June 4, 2010

Washington, D.C. -- Congressman Vern Buchanan (FL-13) said today that Israel has the right to protect itself by inspecting all cargo headed to the Gaza Strip.

“Israel’s naval blockade and inspection of cargo ships is entirely appropriate to prevent munitions and missiles from being delivered to Hamas terrorists in Gaza and subsequently used against innocent Israeli civilians,” the Congressman said.

Buchanan, who visited Israel in 2007, noted that Hamas has publicly called for the annihilation of Israel and continues to send rockets into Israeli territory.

Buchanan applauded Vice President Joe Biden for clearly stating that Israel has a legitimate right to inspect ships headed for Gaza.

“Hamas is a terrorist group in the eyes of the U.S. government,” added Buchanan. “Israel has every reason to be concerned about unchecked cargo going into the Gaza strip. Any ship seeking to deliver goods to the Gaza Strip should be carefully screened. Unfortunately, the so-called Flotilla ignored established means and methods of delivering humanitarian aid in an apparent attempt to provoke a military confrontation. Israeli Navy personnel used force when their lives were threatened.”

“I remain committed to supporting the only democracy in the Middle East, which is surrounded by nations and terrorist organizations that refuse to abide by previous agreements, publicly support Israel’s extinction, and refuse to acknowledge that Israel has a legitimate right to take whatever action it deems necessary to protect itself and its people.” (*Press Release*)

**Republican Whip Eric Cantor (R-VA)**

June 2, 2010

The irony is thick that again the likes of Saudi Arabia and Cuba come together under the UNHRC to lecture the United States and Israel about human rights. I commend the administration for its steadfast support of Israel in resisting another Goldstone-style U.N. investigation. These types of kangaroo courts have one goal, and that is to strip democratic nations of their rights to defend their citizens from terrorism. The United States must not lend its authority to any U.N. action to discredit our democratic ally and set back prospects for peace in the region, and I hope the Obama Administration remains committed to that principle.

As the facts trickle in and we learn more and more about the questionable nature of the crew aboard the Turkish-sponsored Marmara ship, it has become clear that it is false to characterize the nature of this mission as “humanitarian.” Rather, this was an attempt to provoke Israel, create international uproar and force an end to an Egypt-Israel blockade meant to stop Hamas from arming.

In keeping with its policy of delivering aid to the Palestinians, it is important to note that Israel is working to transfer the aid from the flotilla into Gaza. Yet the Hamas government, in the most cynical fashion, has blocked the aid from reaching their own people. Where is the international outrage? (*Press Release*)

June 1, 2010

The events of the last 48 hours are tragic and serve as the latest warning sign that all is not well in the Middle East. As information continues to filter in, I urge the President and his administration to continue to gather all the facts, and if necessary, to veto any biased U.N. resolutions reining in Israel’s right to defend itself.

Israel remains a critical strategic ally and the only democracy in the Middle East. The United States stands with Jerusalem in its effort to ensure the safety and security of its citizenry. We can’t forget why the blockade exists in the first place: to deny Hamas the weaponry and raw materials it needs to continue its rocket attacks in Israel, killing innocent people.

Before predictably rushing to level hyperbolic accusations at Israel, it’s important for the United Nations to consider all the facts surrounding this incident. The reality is that the so-called “humanitarian aid” flotilla steered into an internationally recognized Israeli-Egyptian military blockade of Gaza in an effort to provoke Israel. The flotilla’s own spokeswoman announced that her organization is not a humanitarian group, rather a mission intended to break the blockade of Gaza, and that’s exactly why the ships rejected Israel’s instructions to dock. The truth is that where humanitarian needs exist, the Israelis ensure that food and medicine are brought into Gaza.

There’s a reason why seven of the eight ships were boarded peacefully and without any injuries, while the Mavi Marmara ship descended into violence. The question that should be asked is, “what is that reason?” (*Press Release*)

**Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD)**

June 2, 2010

We must withhold judgment while an investigation is ongoing and until the facts become clear, but it’s important that we keep in mind that Israel has a right to ensure the security of its borders and protect its citizens from terror. I also want to express my deep sadness about the violence and loss of life. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Dennis Cardoza (D-CA)**

June 4, 2010

Many of Israel's detractors have quickly jumped to conclusions about who is to blame in the tragedy that occurred along the Gaza Coast. We would all do well to wait until all the facts of the incident with the Gaza flotilla are known. In the meantime, we cannot ignore all that Israel has endured. During my travels there, I have seen firsthand the aftermath of the terrorist attacks against our friends in the Middle East. Israel has suffered indiscriminate rocket attacks that have impacted children going to school and shoppers going to the local market. For years suicide bombers terrorized the countryside and killed numerous Israelis, including women, children and the elderly. In an instance like this, it is important to know all of the facts before making a judgment. However, I firmly believe Israel has the right – and the absolute responsibility – to protect its citizens. *(Press Release)*

**Rep. Bill Cassidy (R-LA)**

June 4, 2010

“The loss of life is regrettable. It was preventable.”

“‘ Hamas’ organizing principle is the destruction of Israel. In response, Israel inspects imports into Gaza to prevent entry of weapons. This is common knowledge. Bypassing this inspection was intentionally provocative. Intentional provocation can bring unintentional, even tragic consequences.”

“When Hamas recognizes Israel’s right to exist and renounces violence, blockades will end, provocation will be unnecessary, and unintentional consequences will not occur.”*(Press Release)*

**Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-UT)**

June 15, 2010

“We should not be deceived by Israel’s opponents. The flotilla’s primary intent was to provoke Israel for propaganda gain, not to provide relief to Gaza. I have tremendous sympathy for the Palestinians living in Gaza. I have no sympathy for Hamas or for those in the world who turn a blind eye to Hamas. Hamas has been referred to by some in the Arab world as a ‘political organization’ and is not acknowledged as an organized terror ring. Hamas is a terrorist organization, and it has taken the innocent people living in Gaza and a peaceful religion hostage.

“I have walked the Israeli border with Gaza and witnessed firsthand the fear in the eyes of the men, women, and children living there. They live their lives in 15 second increments. From the moment Hamas fires a Qassam rocket into southern Israel, Israeli parents and children have just

15 seconds to seek shelter or face sudden death from an exploding rocket. Israel's use of force to bring down legitimate threats is justified, particularly when those threats include the indiscriminate firing of rockets into communities and neighborhoods filled with children.

“Instead of the international community condemning Israel for legitimate actions to defend itself against real and defined threats, they should be condemning Hamas, and by extension acts of terrorism directed at Israel. I stand strongly with Israel, and invite all who oppose terrorism to do the same.” (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Mike Conaway (R-TX)**

June 3, 2010

I am saddened by the deaths and injuries that occurred during the May 31st incident off the coast of Israel. The great tragedy is that this all could have been avoided.

At its most basic, this incident is about the right of a sovereign nation to defend its people from a terrorist threat. I stand squarely behind the people of Israel as they work to protect their fellow citizens from rocket attacks and to protect Gazans from the violence propagated by the well-armed thugs running Hamas.

The activists who planned this flotilla admitted that they were not concerned with delivering humanitarian supplies, but were actively seeking confrontation with the Israeli military. They was given ample opportunity to redirect their course or otherwise comply with Israel's security requirements, including an offer by Israel to deliver the humanitarian supplies over land, though long established procedures.

A massive amount of arms and munitions are smuggled into Gaza over land and sea for use by Hamas in terror attacks on Israeli civilians. These continual attacks have forced Israel to regulate trade with Gaza to protect the lives of innocent people on both sides. By willfully ignoring the security situation in Gaza and the directives of the Israeli military, the organizers of this flotilla unnecessarily put lives at risk. I am saddened that they chose to pursue actions that led to bloodshed. (*Press Release*)

**Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX)**

June 10, 2010

In recognition of the State of Israel as a strong and steadfast ally to the United States, U.S. Senator John Cornyn (R-Texas) today introduced a resolution to express the sense of the Senate that Israel has an undeniable right to self-defense and to condemn the recent destabilizing actions by terrorist operatives and extremists aboard the Mavi Marmara.

“Every country has a right to defend itself, and Israel is no different,” said Senator Cornyn. “The flotilla was a disgraceful and premeditated attempt to provoke a violent confrontation with Israel, hidden under the cloak of a humanitarian relief effort. This type of despicable conduct must be condemned and I hope my colleagues will join me in cosponsoring this important resolution to help remind the world that the United States stands with Israel.”

On May 28th, 2010, the “Free Gaza” flotilla, sponsored by a Turkish organization and the Humanitarian Relief Foundation, which included the Mavi Marmara and five other ships, departed from a Turkish port and sailed towards Israel’s defensive naval blockade of Gaza. On May 31st, 2010, after repeated Israeli calls to turn around or be peacefully escorted to a port outside of Gaza, the Israeli Navy intercepted the Mavi Marmara 75 miles west of Haifa, Israel, to maintain the integrity of blockade and prevent the potential smuggling of arms and other materials to Hamas and other terrorist organizations. Upon boarding, the Mavi Marmara passengers brutally and violently attacked members of the Israeli Navy with knives, clubs, pipes, and other weapons. Israelis used lethal force in self-defense and killed nine attackers.

Senator Cornyn’s resolution places these events in their historical and strategic context. Since 2001, Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist organizations have fired more than 10,000 rockets and mortars from Gaza into Israel, which killed at least 18 Israelis and wounded dozens more. Currently, approximately 860,000 Israeli civilians—more than 12 percent of Israel’s total population resides within range of the rockets fired from Gaza. In 2007, Israel put in place a legitimate and justified blockade of Gaza out of concern for the safety of its citizens, which has been effective in reducing the firing of rockets from Gaza into southern Israel.

Senator Cornyn’s resolution expresses the sense of the Senate that Israel has an undeniable right to defend itself against any threat to its security. Senator Cornyn’s resolution also makes clear that recent criticism of Israel at the United Nations undermines Israel’s inherent right to self-defense, compromises its sovereignty, and helps legitimize Hamas. (*Press Release*)

June 5, 2010

Well, they are a terrorist organization, no matter how they came to power. And so you can understand why an organization committed to the elimination of Israel, our only reliable ally in the Middle East, is a matter of some concern to them.

And they are entitled, as a matter of their self-defense, to look to see whether weapons or other items were being smuggled in. Egypt has the same sort of blockade, although there are numerous tunnels going beneath the border there between Egypt and Gaza.

So this was pretty clearly a premeditated provocation, and it’s unfortunate that lives were lost. I think, you know, it should have been a situation like it had been before. If the people organizing this flotilla had been committed to a peaceful activity as opposed to provocation, this would not have occurred and Israel would have been able to examine the contents of the flotilla and they would have been delivered to the people in Gaza who needed help. (*ABC – This Week*)

**Rep. Jim Costa (D-CA)**

*June 7, 2010*

“Israel has every right to defend itself against radical activists. Our friend Israel also has a responsibility to prevent weapons and dangerous materials from being smuggled into Gaza. This is the purpose of the legal blockade, to prevent innocent civilian aid from being used as a façade for arms trafficking, and this is why Israeli forces intercepted the Mavi Marmara flotilla recently headed for Gaza. It is essential to remember that this blockade is in place because Hamas, the terrorist organization controlling Gaza, has long made violent threats against Israel.

“Once again, violent individuals have hid behind peace activists and humanitarian aid while threatening the safety and security of our ally Israel. Since Israel’s disengagement from Gaza in 2005, Hamas has fired over 10,000 rockets at its civilian population. These acts of violence are a direct assault on freedom and democracy in the region.

“The United States must stand with Israel as they’ve been placed in this unfortunate situation. Israel is one of our strongest allies and must remain a critical partner in combating terrorism and extremism around the globe.”

**Rep. Joe Crowley (D-NY)**

*June 4, 2010*

“I am saddened by the loss of life and injuries sustained by passengers and Israeli Defense Force members on the Mavi Marmara. Any loss of life, or injury, is regrettable and a tragedy.

“Israel is absolutely correct to be seriously concerned about the smuggling of weapons into Gaza. Hamas, a terrorist organization, controls Gaza and is committed to Israel’s destruction. This is not an imagined problem: thousands of rockets have been fired at Israel from Gaza in recent years.

“It is important to note that Israel offered to inspect and transfer goods from the Mavi Marmara into Gaza before the incident, an offer which was not accepted. This underscores the fact that the Mavi Marmara’s top priority was not getting humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza. Rather, its focus was undermining Israel’s legitimate efforts to defend itself through enforcement of a war-time blockade, as well as provoking a confrontation with the IDF.

“There is a way to deliver humanitarian aid responsibly – and this was not it. Tons of humanitarian aid enters Gaza on a constant and legal basis, facilitated by Israel. Passengers who chose to beat soldiers were not “peaceful protestors”, they were active combatants.

“If Gaza wants the blockade lifted, its leaders know precisely what to do: immediately end its drive to destroy the state of Israel.”

**Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT)**

June 2, 2010

“I regret that ten people lost their lives. While I want to see the restoration of commerce and supplies to Gaza, this flotilla was more about creating an incident than helping people. These events underscore the urgent need for lasting and comprehensive peace in the region, and I look forward to a thorough investigation into what transpired.” (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Charlie Dent (R-PA)**

June 2, 2010

It is terribly disappointing this incident ended with the loss of human lives. However, I believe Israel has the right to protect its citizens from potential threats to their safety. We are fully aware the people of Israel face daily attacks from terrorist groups rooted in Gaza, including Hamas. Naturally, Israel must take tremendous precaution to ensure weapons and ammunition are not funneled to terrorist organizations from abroad. While I am eager to learn more about the events that lead to this violent confrontation, I believe Israel has the right to inspect ships bound for Gaza and enforce the existing multinational blockade, which was established to prevent Hamas from gaining the tools to launch future deadly attacks against the Israeli people. (*Office of Rep. Charlie Dent*)

**Rep. Ted Deutch (D-FL)**

June 1, 2010

I regret the loss of life suffered during Monday’s incident, but I would ask those reflexively condemning Israel to refrain from making aggressive statements that will only inflame the situation. I must also point out a few facts to put this incident into context. The delivery of aid to Gaza by this flotilla convoy was a pretense arranged by the participants in order to launch an act of political provocation against Israel. If the delivery of aid was the true goal, not to break the blockade, there are alternative methods of delivery that are available. Had the flotilla heeded Israel’s repeated warnings, the cargo would have been unloaded and safely delivered intact to Gaza by trucks, as is protocol. Nevertheless, the convoy participants ignored these options and chose to proceed toward the blockade in an attempt to create a political confrontation. Lastly, under international law, a maritime blockade is recognized as a legitimate tool to be used at a time of international conflict, and Israel has the same rights in this respect as every other nation on earth. Also, missing from much of the reporting thus far is the fact that the current government in Gaza is controlled by Hamas, a terrorist organization sworn to the destruction of Israel.

The worst result of this incident and the loss of life would be for the United Nations to shift

focus from Iran's accelerating effort toward gaining nuclear weapons, the greatest threat to global security. I urge the Security Council to quickly pass the toughest possible sanctions on Iran. (*Press Release*)

**Reps. Lincoln and Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL)**

June 3, 2010

“Israel has the absolute right and duty to protect itself and its citizens from terrorist organizations; it's a matter of national security. This includes the right to board and inspect ships which are suspected of transporting weapons, possibly used to kill Israelis, and the right to confront terrorist organizations such as Hamas in Gaza.

It is well documented that terrorist organizations, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, and state-sponsors of terrorism, like the dictatorships in Iran and Syria, falsely use the cover of “humanitarian efforts” to shield their illicit efforts to transport weapons.

At this time it is vitally important that the United States stand with Israel's right to defend its civilians from national security threats and work to stop international efforts, such as in the UN, to use this incident to bash Israel. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Brad Ellsworth (D-IN)**

June 7, 2010

“Last week's events are regrettable and the loss of human life saddens us all. And the recent news that Iran may provide Revolutionary Guard naval units to escort convoys seeking to break the Israeli blockade is very troubling and will only further enflame the region. The world and the United Nations must not rush to judgment against Israel, our trusted ally and friend. We must allow Israel, not the United Nations, who produced the biased Goldstone report, to conduct a formal investigation into the flotilla incident that is prompt, impartial, credible, and transparent. During these times of crisis, the relationship between the United States and Israel must remain strong. Let there be no doubt, Israelis have the right to defend themselves and their homeland against the threat of violence.” (*Office of Rep. Brad Ellsworth*)

**Rep. Eliot Engel (D-NY)**

June 9, 2010

The U.S.-Israel relationship is a special relationship, and it's a relationship that needs to be strengthened. The United States is Israel's only true friend. In fact, when you look at the United Nations or the so-called Human Rights Council in the United Nations, it's really a kangaroo court stacked up against Israel. No wonder Israel doesn't accept what the so-called “international

body” says about them, because they can never do anything right. They’re always condemned no matter what they try, no matter what they do.

My colleagues have pointed out that Israel, like every other sovereign nation, has the right to defend itself, that Israel has at least twice seized large caches of arms aboard Iranian ships bound for Hamas and Hezbollah, and a blockade is an appropriate security measure when employed in the face of hostility such as that directed by Hamas against Israel.

Hamas doesn’t recognize Israel’s right to exist, has vowed to destroy Israel, won’t abide by any agreements that have been signed by Israel and the previous Palestinian governments, and so Israel has to make sure that terrorist attacks don’t come from Gaza into Israel as they have for such a long time. As my colleagues have pointed out, Israel has offered to inspect the flotillas and let all the humanitarian aid on the flotillas go to Gaza, but these people on the flotilla were obviously not interested in delivering humanitarian aid. They were interested in provoking a violent reaction from Israel.

I just want to stand in support of the U.S.-Israel relationship, a strong relationship. Israel is our best friend and ally in the Middle East. Hopefully, soon there will be a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, two states side by side living in peace and harmony, a Palestinian state and an Israeli Jewish state. That is something that we all strive to work for.

I want to thank Mr. Weiner for organizing this. I want to thank Mr. Hoyer, our majority leader, for always being a stalwart. I want to thank Mr. Akin for giving us the opportunity to speak. When it comes to Israel, this Congress is united with strong bipartisan support, and we’re going to keep it that way. (*Congressional Record*)

June 2, 2010

Once again, the world has rushed to judgment in its condemnation of Israel for the crisis surrounding the boarding of ships headed for Gaza. As in the past, the critics of Israel don’t ask the serious questions; they merely try Israel in the media and pronounce it guilty without considering all of the facts.

This flotilla was no mere humanitarian mission, it was really a Trojan Horse designed to attack the Israelis and force an international incident. My question to anyone condemning the Israeli Navy is ‘what should they have done’?

While I regret any loss of life, I must ask why so-called peaceful protestors were beating Israel’s boarding parties with clubs. The Israeli navy boarded the ship armed only with paintball guns – a “weapon” used for recreation and to control ordinary protest mobs – and were attacked with knives, bats and other weapons. Even after that, the Israeli Navy deployed stun grenades rather than deadly force. Instead the attacks increased, with even more people joining in. Finally, they did what any armed forces member of any nation would do, they defended themselves.

This was anything but a group of peace-minded civic demonstrators. Rather, this ship was filled with hate-filled provocateurs bent on violence. Their aim was not to distribute humanitarian

supplies, but to violently force themselves through Israel's blockade of Gaza. If they truly wanted to deliver food and medicine to the people in Gaza, they would have accepted Israel's offer to dock in the port of Ashdod and permit humanitarian organizations to distribute the aid after Israel inspected the cargo for weapons. The organizers of the flotilla have alleged links to Hamas and reportedly played a role in the attempted Millennium bombing in Los Angeles.

Hundreds of trucks filled with humanitarian supplies already enter Gaza every day. Israel's blockade of Gaza doesn't affect that. Yet, the Gaza blockade is a matter of life and death for Israelis. Israel seals off Gaza not because it wants to, but because it must. Lifting the blockade would mean shipments of missiles, rockets, and bombs reaching the Hamas terrorists who control Gaza.

Let's put the blame where it belongs. True humanitarians would not have responded with violence, and no one should ever confuse relief workers with violent instigators. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Randy Forbes (R-VA)**

*June 10, 2010*

Mr. Speaker, over the past week and a half, in response to the regrettable loss of lives off the coast of Gaza, there has been much controversy and speculation over Israel's right to self defense. Yet we are reminded again of the situation Israeli families face every single day.

Imagine two young parents living each day going through their mental check list of how to protect their children. Is the path to the shelter clear? Do they know each other's schedules so they can find them if there is a missile strike? Do the schools have their emergency numbers? Have they taught the kids enough to react quickly in the event of a strike, but not too much to scare them?

While the kids are at school they worry about hearing sirens of an imminent attack from a neighboring territory and are always worried that it will come when they can't physically protect their children.

When this happened in America in the early 1960s these were my parents' fears. But with all of these fears they knew that the United States would do what was necessary to protect our families and our country. It would prevent the weapons from falling into the hands of people who wanted to destroy our way of life.

Like the United States during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Israelis have blockaded the source of the threat to their homeland.

America was able to protect itself, and we must ensure that Israel has the ability to do the same. (*Congressional Record*)

**Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA)**

*June 2, 2010*

We ought to be very clear that the blockade has not simply been an Israeli blockade. It's been an Israeli/Egyptian blockade. And I think that's very important, because I do think the Israelis have a legitimate concern about being unfairly blamed and double standards.

By the way, I don't remember quite so much worldwide outrage when the North Koreans sank a South Korean submarine and 46 people were killed. There are people now very upset about Israel on a much more ambiguous situation as to what could and should have happened....

Look, you have this fundamental problem with Israel, for them. They gave up Gaza voluntarily. I was one of those who for a long time was arguing they should. What happened was, Gaza was then occupied by a group of people who think Israel shouldn't exist and who are in fact on our terrorist list for good reason.

Now, what you then have is a blockade. And the argument is, well, there were no weapons in this shipment. But a blockade that allows some things in and not others has to maintain control over the ports of entry, so you can know what is in or not.

Given that, I think it was irresponsible of the pro-Hamas people who organized this set of ships to go in there to do that, and obviously understood the potential for violence. That does not mean that everything the Israelis did in this situation was right. When military people are in a situation where they have to use force, as they had to do here, not everything will be done well. Not everything will be done correctly. I do agree it would be in Israel's interest to have an independent inquiry, appointed by Israelis.

By the way, the Israeli government, the Israeli judiciary, has a very good record of holding the Israeli government to account. The Israeli Supreme Court has been much tougher on the Israeli government on security matters than the U.S. Supreme Court has been on our government, or the French or the others have been....

The context is relevant, that Egypt and Israel both said, look, we have terrorists running a piece of territory here. We do not trust them to be peaceful. And we're going to monitor what goes in.

I agree things could be done better. But in this particular situation, I think it would be in everybody's interest for there to be an independent inquiry, which Israel has shown itself capable of having internally, to figure out who did what, when. But the basic concept -- I do believe -- put it this way, if Hamas were in Canada, America would have a tougher blockade than Israel has....

It's true, this is causing -- the blockade hurts people in Gaza. And by the way, again, it was an Egyptian/Israeli blockade. So let's be clear. The Egyptians, for their own reasons of self-preservation, were doing this. Blockades hurt people. The blockade of North Korea hurts North Koreans....

So again, if the blockade can be done better, I'm not an expert on that. Yes, humanitarian aid should get in. Food should get in. The Israelis say it has been. If there's a dispute there, let's work to make -- to increase it. And an inquiry -- look and say what we've done with the American military. You put military people in a position where they have to use force and it's not going to be done perfectly.

But on the fundamentals, on the right to a blockade, again, we have to go back to the fact this doesn't happen in the West Bank. It happens in Gaza because a terrorist group that's opposed to Israel's very existence took physical control from the elected government at the time, the president, who won the parliament and have used it as a base of attacks. (*Interview by Chris Matthews on MSNBC*)

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The article in today's Boston Herald is inaccurate in saying that I "had harsh words yesterday for the Israeli Navy." The harsh words I spoke were specifically aimed at some non-governmental settlers in the West Bank who I believe have treated Arabs very badly, and, it should be noted, in contradiction to official Israeli government policy. But I had nothing critical to say about the Israeli Navy. Indeed, I noted that I was not familiar with the specifics of the incident, and I talked about the U.S. experience in Afghanistan as an example of the difficult problems that occur when military organizations are required to use force.

I did say that I thought it was important in the interest of Israel and others that there be a credible inquiry into this, but I believe this inquiry should be conducted by a credible group commissioned by the Israeli government. The record of the United Nations with regard to Israel is a badly biased one and clearly no inquiry chartered by the U.N. would have the credibility that it ought to have.

My reference to "innocent people" was a reference to the problems the American military has encountered in Afghanistan – and before that to a great extent Iraq. As to the situation involving the Israeli Navy and those who were seeking to land in Gaza to aid and support Hamas, I noted that I did not know the specifics. I do believe that the decision to seek to land that group of ships in the territory that is controlled by a terrorist group was a wholly irresponsible one, and created the situation in which violence occurred. I have since learned more about the incident and I note the Israeli report that violent force in fact initiated by those whose boat was boarded – entirely appropriately in my judgment – by the Israeli Navy. The Israeli government has committed itself to appointing a critical inquiry and I support that. While governments investigating themselves are always faced with some skepticism, I believe that the Israeli government has a better record of legitimate self-criticism than almost any other government in the world in this regard, and the Israeli Supreme Court in particular has shown independence unmatched by any other judiciary in dealing with security actions taken against hostile forces.

Further, I want to emphasize again that my reference to actions that I am ashamed of is a reference to non-official actions by some settlers who have acted inappropriately and sometimes violently against Arabs. I continue to believe that the Israeli government should be pushing

harder to prevent any new settlements and to remove settlements as part of a genuine two state agreement from those areas of the West Bank not in and around Jerusalem. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA)**

June 15, 2010

I rise today to express my support for the right that all nations have to secure their borders in self-defense. Our close ally, Israel, shares a border with Gaza, a region controlled by the terrorist organization Hamas. Since 2001, thousands of rockets have been launched from Gaza into Israel, killing more than a dozen Israelis and wounding hundreds and terrifying that nation. We also know that Hamas receives material support from Iran, an international pariah that oppresses its own citizens while funding terrorist organizations throughout the region. For all these reasons, Israel has chosen to restrict imports to the Gaza Strip, insisting that all deliveries must be inspected to make sure that weapons are not smuggled into the territory.

Today, I call on Hamas leadership to reject their past support for terrorism, renounce violence, and embrace the two-state solution so that Israelis and Palestinians can live their lives freely, in peace, and security.

I also call on all powers in the Middle East to value human life and to do everything to avoid bloodshed. The loss of life in the flotilla incident was tragic, and I look forward to the findings of the recently formed Independent Public Commission, which will examine such issues as the naval blockade of Gaza, actions taken by the commandos during the flotilla incident, and the identities and conduct of the organizers and participants in the flotilla.

In the meantime, we must focus on avoiding escalation, preventing more violence, and continuing the peace process. The greatest tragedy would be to allow the flotilla incident to end the region's prospects for peace. (*Congressional Record*)

**Rep. Scott Garrett (R-NJ)**

June 9, 2010

Our allies in Israel are in the midst of an ongoing crisis. Last week, this became crystal clear when so-called "freedom activists" attacked IDF soldiers. Regrettably, several Israelis were injured and nine of the activists killed.

In the aftermath of this incident, Israel has endured criticisms from Turkey, the United Nations, and the press. Even the U.S. Administration has been somewhat muted in its support of Israel's self-defense. These responses mystify me when I consider the background and reality of recent events.

Fact: Israel is at war with Hamas. Hamas, which is recognized as a terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union, still abides by a charter which calls for the destruction of the State of Israel. Furthermore, Hamas continues to espouse anti-Semitic propaganda en masse. Since 2001, thousands of rockets have been launched from Gaza into civilian-populated areas in southern Israel, indiscriminately killing and injuring innocent, unsuspecting men, women, and children. That's why I introduced legislation in 2008 which highlighted and condemned the ongoing rocket attacks. My resolution passed the House with strong bi-partisan support, but the rocket attacks have continued.

Fact: Israel is not at war with the peaceful citizens of Gaza. Israel fully withdrew its soldiers and citizens from the Gaza Strip in 2005 in the hopes of attaining peace and creating an environment conducive to negotiations with the Palestinian Authority. Last week, after Israel diverted the flotilla to the port of Ashdod for inspection, Israel proceeded to transport the humanitarian cargo to the Gaza Strip. In fact, Israel takes a proactive stance in providing humanitarian supplies to Gaza's civilians.

Fact: Israel did not violate international law by imposing a blockade on Gaza. Historically, any sovereign nation at war may impose a blockade. Egypt, for example, had imposed a blockade on Gaza. The U.S. itself imposed a blockade on the Confederates during the Civil War, on Cuba during the Cold War, and on Germany and Japan during World War II. Israel is justified in its attempts to prevent radical organizations from supplying Hamas with weapons that could eventually harm Israeli civilians. To further that end, I recently introduced H.Res. 1241, which supports Israel's right to maintain and construct security fences along its borders.

Fact: The interception of the Mavi Marmara was not an isolated action by the Israeli Defense Forces. In recent history, Israel has peacefully diverted nine other "humanitarian" missions, inspected their cargoes, and delivered the aid to Gaza. The boarding tactics employed last week were necessary to restrain such a large vessel.

Fact: The main mission of the flotilla was not to provide humanitarian supplies for civilians in Gaza. The six ships were sponsored in part by the IHH, an extremist Turkish organization with ties to terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda. While the IDF peacefully boarded five of the six vessels that made up the flotilla, activists and militants aboard the sixth vessel had armed themselves with iron bars, knives, and clubs.

Fact: Hamas is not Israel's only threat. In 2002, Israel intercepted a ship in the Red Sea which was carrying 50 tons of weaponry provided by Iran. In November of last year, Israel intercepted an Iranian ship carrying hundreds of tons of weaponry to Hezbollah in Lebanon. Iran's president has repeatedly declared his hatred for Israel while continuing his pursuit of nuclear weapon development. As a member of the Iran Sanctions Conference Committee, I will continue to support prompt, strong action to deter Iran's evil ambitions.

I must ask those who condemn Israel, "Have you examined the facts?" It is crucial for the United States to stand beside Israel during these tumultuous times and I am heartened that more than a dozen senators and over 60 of my House colleagues have released statements supporting Israel. I urge the Administration, the media, and American citizens to join us in defending Israel from

false assertions. Moreover, I encourage the Attorney General to prosecute any American citizen who aids Hamas. The strategic relationship between our two democratic governments must withstand the threats and actions of terrorists who seek to create a rift between our two nations. (*Congressional Record*)

**Rep. Jim Gerlach (R-PA)**

*June 3, 2010*

“Based on all the facts available, the sole purpose of the flotilla was to provoke Israel and those aboard the Turkish ship brutally attacked the Israeli Marines,” Gerlach said. “Given the circumstances, the Israeli Marines had every right to protect themselves and their fellow Marines.

“It is also important to remember that Hamas has terrorized Israelis and Palestinians living along the Gaza border by launching approximately 7,000 missile and rocket attacks since 2005 when Israel withdrew from Gaza. Considering the constant threat of attack, the inspection of all ships and cargo headed for Hamas territory is absolutely reasonable and the existing embargo is necessary. Until the leaders in Gaza end their persistent efforts to destroy Israel and terrorize innocent citizens, Israel has every right to protect itself under international law and enforce blockades in international waters.

“Even though Hamas continues to stoke violence and unrest in the region, Israel has made sure that those living in Gaza receive vast amounts of humanitarian aid and medical supplies. In fact, Israel is screening the items aboard the Turkish vessels intercepted earlier this week and is working to facilitate the distribution of any humanitarian items and medical supplies.” (*Press Release*)

**Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY)**

*May 31, 2010*

I am greatly concerned by public statements earlier today from a UN official that displays an alarming rush to judgment against Israel before the facts have been gathered and ignores Israel’s basic right to defend herself against terror.

As the United Nations Security Council convenes to discuss the Gaza-bound flotilla, it is deplorable for the UN Special Rapporteur for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Richard Falk, to urge boycotts and sanctions against Israel. Not only is it irresponsible to issue such verdicts before all the facts are known, but these types of proposals only exacerbate the challenges in the Middle East.

While I am deeply saddened by the loss of life, we must recognize that Israel has a right to

defend herself and we have to withhold judgment until the facts are fully understood. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Louie Gohmert (R-TX)**

June 15, 2010

“The recent effort to provoke Israel by having a so-called peaceful flotilla intentionally violate the Israeli blockade was highly predictable. With the current White House making obvious snubs, even showing hostility toward Israel’s leaders, it has been obvious to observers of history that something was surely going to be set in motion to provoke Israel. The delay and ambiguity of the White House’s response since the flotilla will only encourage further provocation against Israel, unless this nation’s leaders take a strong stand in support of our ally. For months now, I have been seeking a resolution of support for Israel to take whatever action is necessary to protect itself and its citizens, as well as seeking to have Congress extend an invitation to Prime Minister Netanyahu to speak to a joint session of Congress. The purpose is to send a clear message to the world and especially Israel’s enemies that we may have disagreements between us, but we are still strong, devoted allies and we will not stand idly by while Israel’s enemies try to destroy it. We will do whatever is necessary to protect Israel against anti-Semitic or anti-Israeli forces.” (*Office of Rep. Louie Gohmert*)

**Rep. Kay Granger (R-TX)**

June 9, 2010

“The consequences of the international community’s knee-jerk reaction to Israel’s flotilla response are now evident. With pledges from the Iranian Red Crescent to help future flotillas break Israel’s naval blockade there is a high risk that an already fragile situation could only worsen. As a democracy, Israel has the right to defend her borders from Hamas and their Iranian sponsors. Without Israel’s blockade and the ability to screen freight heading toward Gaza, this already troubling security threat would only increase and more innocent lives would be at risk. Unfortunately, the world’s response has only enabled Iran.

“In the wake of new sanctions approved by the U.N. Security Council, it is a critical time for the international community to keep their eye on what is truly emerging as one of the greatest security threats of our time – Iran.” (*Office of Rep. Kay Granger*)

**Rep. Alan Grayson (D-FL)**

June 9, 2010

The question that has been raised by critics of Israel for the past week is why is Israel intercepting ships on the so-called high seas, 100 miles from its own shores, and the answer can

be summed up in one simple phrase: self-defense. That simple phrase explains what we saw and explains Israel's continuing need to protect itself.

Over 1,000 rockets have been fired from Gaza into the territory of Israel, 1,000 rockets. Imagine what we would do if 1,000 rockets were fired into San Diego. Imagine what we would do if 1,000 rockets were fired into Seattle or into Detroit or any other border area.

In the case of Israel, 1 million people live within rocket range of Gaza, and those 1 million people have been living through hell for years with a 15-second warning to seek shelter when a rocket attacks. And as a result of that, 13 Israelis have died, but it's inflicted huge harm on the people who live within rocket range in south Israel. One-third of all the children in south Israel suffer from post-traumatic stress syndrome. Again, imagine what we would do to stop such attacks if they were directed against us.

That's the fundamental reason why Israel feels obliged, the Israeli military feels obliged, to do what it needs to do to protect its citizens. These ships were not in any way interfered with because they were carrying humanitarian aid. The ships were interfered with for one reason and one reason only. That's because they could have been carrying missiles and rockets and things that could be made into missiles and rockets. It's a fundamental duty of the Israeli military to protect the people of Israel, just as it's a fundamental duty of our military to protect us. What they did was what they needed to do in order to ensure the safety of their own people, and honestly, in the same circumstances, we would have done the same thing. (*Congressional Record*)

**Rep. John Hall (D-NY)**

June 10, 2010

I wish to thank the Jewish Federation of Greater Orange County for the opportunity to have this statement read tonight. I wish I could be here in person to hear your views on Israel, but I am in Washington because there are votes in the House this afternoon.

The United States-Israel relationship is more important now than ever. Israel is our friend, critical ally and partner in the war against Islamic terrorism. It is precisely when times are tough that the United States needs to stand by Israel both on principle and to protect our mutual interests.

Recent events have shown the tremendous challenges that are lined up to oppose Israel. Two weeks ago, when Israel acted to stop the flotilla trying to break its legal blockage of Gaza, the international community responded by rushing to unfair and biased judgment, blaming Israel and ignoring the clear incitement by the flotilla.

Events like this serve to distract from the goal we all share – peace between Israel and its neighbors. It also takes the focus off the actions of true rogue nations like Iran. I am glad that this week the UN Security Council agreed to strong sanctions against Iran, and I will continue to

push for further crippling sanctions against Iran by supporting final passage of H.R. 2194, the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2009.

Thank you again for the opportunity to have a statement read on my behalf. I will keep working hard in Congress to ensure that Israel continues to have the full support and backing of the United States. (*Office of Rep. John Hall*)

**Rep. Debbie Halvorson (D-IL)**

June 10, 2010

“Israel is a steadfast American ally. The loss of any life is a tragedy but we should not rush to any conclusions without all of the facts. Israel exists in a very dangerous region and continues to face threats to its security from Iran and terrorist groups such as Hamas. I strongly support Israel’s right to defend itself as a sovereign nation and keep its borders secure. I look forward to reviewing the findings from a fair investigation into this unfortunate incident, which demonstrates the urgency of working towards a resolution that ensures both security and peace for Israel and the Palestinians.” (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Phil Hare (D-IL)**

June 9, 2010

The interception by Israeli security forces of a flotilla trying to breach a blockade of Gaza is another reminder of this. I fully support Israel and her right to defend herself in this or any other situation. But this incident serves as a reminder that the current situation is untenable and leaves Israel less secure, and we must work towards creating the conditions necessary for a permanent two-state solution. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Jeb Hensarling (R-TX)**

June 17, 2010

Madam Speaker, I come to the floor today to express my strong support for the State of Israel , adding my voice alongside that of the millions of Americans who support the State of Israel .

On May 31, Israeli forces took military action and boarded six ships in a flotilla that was attempting to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza. No matter how regrettable the loss of life may be in this incident, it does not change the underlying fact that Israel has a right to defend herself, and in this case was exercising it.

When Hamas seized control of Gaza, this terrorist organization used it as a base of operations from which to commit acts of terrorism against Israel and her citizens. In response, Israel

imposed a blockade of Gaza to prevent weapons from reaching the hands of terrorists to be used to maim and kill innocent Israeli citizens. By implementing this policy and stemming the ability of Hamas to carry out acts of terrorism, Israel not only saved lives in Israel , but also has saved lives in Gaza.

Had this flotilla truly been about providing humanitarian aid to Gaza, why did they not accept Israel's offer to let the ships dock at an Israeli port, be inspected, and then proceed over land to Gaza? Based on the flotilla's actions, it seems the political mission of attempting to break the Israeli blockade was of higher priority than the humanitarian mission of providing aid to Gaza.

The State of Israel is one of the United States' staunchest allies, and our two nations have enjoyed a special relationship since the founding of the State of Israel over sixty years ago.

Over the course of this relationship, the United States has proudly and unwaveringly stood by our friend and ally, Israel . We should and must continue to do so now. (*Congressional Record*)

### **Rep. Jim Himes (D-CT)**

June 9, 2010

One of the most disheartening aspects of the flotilla situation was the extent to which the facts were initially set aside by much of the world, and instead, prejudice was allowed to emerge, a prejudice against our ally, Israel. And we subsequently learned, of course, that the facts are a good deal more complicated than perhaps we were led to believe initially. As my colleague from New York points out, this was a flotilla with more than one agenda, a flotilla with a clear intention of provoking the kind of response that was ultimately provoked. And make no mistake, there's not a person in this Chamber or anywhere else that isn't saddened by the loss of life in the Mediterranean.

But I'd like to step back for a moment, away from the immediate facts that Mr. Weiner did such a good job at articulating, to some larger issues that cannot be lost in the week-to-week, the day-to-day of our relationship with the State of Israel.

The best way I can encapsulate what I'm talking about here is that Israel, for the United States, is family. We speak of a special relationship with Great Britain. We have at least a special relationship with the nation of Israel. It is a relationship of family. In some cases, very literally. In other cases, and for this Nation as a whole, we are family because we share so many values, so many of these values that are incorporated into this building, into our constitutive documents, our Judeo-Christian values, to which we owe a debt of obligation to Israel. And, of course, it is the only democracy in a very, very dangerous region. For that reason alone, we would resonate with the State of Israel. And, of course, something that is all too often forgotten, the economic ties that we have, the economic similarities, economies based on innovation and creativity.

All three of these things make Israel family, and we can't lose sight of this as the facts are outed. As investigations are undertaken, we can't lose track of that underlying fact, especially in a

world where our family is at risk--and this room is full of fathers and mothers, and we know what that phrase means.

I traveled to Israel last summer, and I stood at Sderot and saw how close and how severe the risks of Hamas, an entity dedicated to the destruction of the State of Israel, how that is not abstract. In fact, that is barely an arm's length away from the State of Israel. To the north, of course, Hezbollah, another entity, sponsored by Iran, dedicated to the eradication of the State of Israel. And, of course, Iran itself, not far away and hell bent on the creation of weapons of mass destruction and leaving absolutely no ambiguity about what it would do with those weapons of mass destruction.

I'm not saying that any of that changes the facts that my colleague from New York has laid on the table that will be investigated, that will be considered, that will probably be most interestingly and comprehensively investigated by Israel herself. But we cannot, any more than we lose loyalty to our sons and daughters, our cousins, our brothers and sisters and our spouses, forget that we are talking about family, and that when family is at risk, we lean in to our family, and we remind the world that there is a reason why Israel is part of our family--a reason of values, a reason of democracy, and the reason that we stand here today to remind the world that Israel is our family. (*Congressional Record*)

June 2, 2010

Israel is our good friend and our only long term ally in a dangerous part of the world. As Americans we do not rush to judgment before we have the facts. As tragic as the situation in the Mediterranean is, I urge all parties involved to do all they can to reduce tension and to allow the facts to be examined. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Paul Hodes (D-NH)**

June 3, 2010

“Without question, Israel has both the right to act in self-defense and the duty to protect its people from terror. That includes the right to stop Hamas, a terrorist organization, from acquiring the means to do harm to Israel. The ships which set out for Gaza were on clear notice of Israel's intent to protect itself and its citizens and the reasonable alternatives Israel had provided for delivering legitimate humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people in Gaza. I am deeply saddened by the loss of life in this incident and the harm to Israeli soldiers. The indication that some of the participants in the confrontation intentionally sought to do violence and to provoke violence is reprehensible.

The circumstances of the incident should be and are being investigated. While these investigations continue, supporters of Hamas and those who would seek to delegitimize Israel are already exploiting these sad events to further incite terrorism and hatred. As Americans, we must not allow propaganda to displace facts. Israel, which withdrew unilaterally from Gaza, has faced a takeover by Hamas in Gaza, followed by a barrage of rockets and terror attacks.

One thing is clear: America's bond of friendship and support for Israel is unshakeable and will not be shaken. Not on my watch.

All of us agree that lost life is tragic. We should also agree that the current situation in which Israel's security is jeopardized and the Palestinian people are used as pawns by those who would harm Israel must change. I will continue to work with anyone who is willing to stand alongside me in order to ensure that throughout the Middle East a peaceful solution, in the best interest of both the Israeli and the Palestinian people, can be found. At the same time, we must continue to stand up to enemies like Iran who threaten us and our allies, and who are working to exploit this tragedy. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Rush Holt (D-NJ)**

*June 10, 2010*

Mr. Speaker, the events that transpired in the Mediterranean off the coast of Israel on May 31st were profoundly unfortunate and the loss of life is deeply regrettable.

We await a full and credible account of what happened aboard the Mavi Marmara, yet we know that Israel has the right and obligation to protect her citizens and borders, in this case by enforcing a legal naval blockade to allow certification of peaceful end use of goods transported into Gaza.

In the days since the incident, Israel has released all people detained and has inspected and trucked the flotilla aid cargo to Gaza, where I understand it awaits permission from Hamas to cross.

Sadly, last week's confrontation could have been avoided. Israel offered the flotilla organizers the chance to have their cargo inspected at the Port of Ashdod and transported to Gaza. Five of the six ships in the flotilla complied nonviolently, but the Mavi Marmara, loaded with over 500 people, refused.

The sequence of events that subsequently led to violence is disputed, but it is obvious, to me anyway, that the actions of the Mavi Marmara were needlessly provocative.

Israel should lead an impartial, transparent, and prompt examination of the incident. And inquiries may show how the interdiction could have been accomplished without loss of life.

It seems to me that the Israeli soldiers were right to defend themselves from the brutal assault. We saw this on video. It does not seem clear that the situation had to unfold as it did, however.

Israel announced yesterday that a highly respected team of experts will review the investigations that are now under way, with a report expected in about a month. The United States should assist our ally in this endeavor, and the world community should withhold judgment until a reliable

inquiry is complete. Yet many around the world, once again, are rushing to blame Israel before fully examining all the facts.

The United States, correctly, voted against a United Nations Human Rights Council resolution that called for an independent fact-finding mission, while at the same time, prematurely condemning Israel's actions. This apparent bias cannot be allowed to inflame an already volatile situation.

I have called for increased humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza for more than a year now. Legitimate humanitarian needs cannot be ignored. However, continued interference and provocations by any nation or faction in the region are unhelpful and dangerous.

The United States, the Arab states, and others must continue to facilitate vigorous and sustained diplomacy until lasting peace is achieved. Ultimately, only a just, permanent, and peaceful settlement between Israelis and Palestinians can ensure the security and the welfare of all in the region. (*Congressional Record*)

### **Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD)**

June 9, 2010

I thank my friend for yielding. I thank my friend for leading this effort at my request, and I thank those who have joined in raising our voice to defend actions that really need no defense, actions that any nation on Earth would take if it were similarly threatened, any nation on Earth.

Mr. Speaker, in the early morning hours of Monday, May 31, Israel naval forces intercepted six ships carrying mostly Turkish demonstrators attempting to break the blockade of the Gaza Strip. There was no confusion. That's what they said they were going to do. Israel gave them notice 2 weeks prior to this that they would not allow that to happen. So there was no confusion here about what was happening.

Five of the six ships complied with the IDF requests. The largest of them, however, the Mavi Marmara, refused, clearly bent on violent confrontation as it was boarded by Israeli defense forces, as they knew they would be. There was no confusion. These IDF troops were violently attacked with knives, clubs, and other weapons.

Let me remind you that in five of the six in this flotilla there was no violence. There was something in common on all of those ships. IDF forces were on all of those ships. But five of those ships, knowing full well that the blockade would not be allowed to be breached, offered no violent resistance.

At the end of the skirmish on the Marmara, seven members of the IDF had suffered injuries, including gunshot wounds and head trauma, and nine demonstrators, tragically, on the Mavi Marmara had been killed. No one wanted that result. I think not even those who were committing

the violence on the IDF forces wanted that. But once violence is initiated, one cannot predict the outcome.

Those deaths are tragic. The events leading up to them deserve a full and scrupulous investigation. But this much, ladies and gentlemen, is clear. To call all the passengers of the Mavi Marmara nonviolent peace activists would be a victory for propaganda, not for fact. Peace activists don't launch attacks with knives and guns, and they certainly don't do so while chanting slogans calling for the death of Jews as an al Jazeera broadcast showed. Not an Israeli broadcast, but an Al-Jazeera broadcast showed the chants from those ships, from this ship, Kill the Jews.

However much we lament those nine deaths--and we do so--the fact is that the IDF was faced with an organized, violent assault and responded in self-defense, as we would expect any of our own forces to do wherever they may be sent to defend our country. Unfortunately, but not unsurprisingly, this incident has renewed international condemnation for Israel's blockade of Gaza from countries I suggest to my colleagues that would do exactly the same thing.

I cannot believe there's a country in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in South America, or on the North American continent that would not say, If you breach this blockade that we have in place for our own security, we will confront you and stop you.

But that blockade exists for a reason: to keep weapons out of the hands of Hamas, a terrorist organization dedicated to the destruction of Israel and to random attacks on Israeli civilians.

Mr. Weiner has been pointing out the map. Probably most of us on this floor who are going to speak have been to Sderot. Some of us have been in the gymnasium that is an armed camp where it is the only safe place for the children of Sderot to play. Some have been with me to Sderot.

The attack on Israeli civilians has continued without abatement. I don't mean that it hasn't lessened from time to time, but never has there been a time when Israelis felt that the violence was concluded, because Hamas has made it clear that it will not conclude.

Hamas is dedicated to the destruction of Israel and to random attacks on Israeli civilians. The blockade was launched with the cooperation of Israel's neighbor Egypt when Hamas staged a violent coup to expel its political rivals and seize total control of Gaza. Who were its political rivals? Palestinians. The elected leadership of the Palestinian Authority.

And the blockade could end today, my friends, if Hamas recognized Israel's right to exist--as is the principle of the United Nations--gave up its commitment to murdering civilians, and released the Israeli soldier it holds captive.

To the extent that life is hard for those in Gaza, the prime cause is the terrorist organization that keeps them hostage, holds power through violence, and monopolizes the food and humanitarian supplies that Israel allows across the border.

Indeed, ladies and gentlemen, my colleagues, pay close attention to this point. Indeed, it is Hamas, not Israel, that is currently preventing the humanitarian goods from this very flotilla from reaching the Palestinians in Gaza. Not the blockade, but Hamas.

Finally, the United States should and will resist all one-sided attempts to condemn Israel at the United Nations. The UN, a body committed by its charter to universal human rights, has for much of its history, unfortunately, been sadly fixated on singling Israel out for condemnation--the only democratic nation in that region of the world that recognizes human rights. And we see the Supreme Court of Israel saying, time after time, you cannot do that government. That is a nation of laws. Yet it has been singled out for condemnation as much more serious crimes and crises have gone unaddressed throughout the world.

The biased record extends beyond the infamous 1975 resolution equating Zionism with racism. The U.N. General Assembly has convened an emergency special session 10 times. Not, I would suggest to you, when the North Koreans killed, obviously premeditatedly, 46 individuals in their ship of South Korea in South Korean borders. Six of the times that they met out of 10 have focused on one small besieged nation, Israel, while no emergency session was ever held on the Rwandan genocide, not held on the ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, not held on the genocide in Sudan.

The 2001 U.N. World Conference Against Racism neglected racism around the world to again single out, almost exclusively, Israel and Zionism. The U.N. Human Rights Council, whose members include Saudi Arabia, China, and Cuba, has only one permanent topic on its official agenda. Now, I have mentioned three genocides that have occurred. They are not on that agenda. Israel. Even Secretary-General Kofi Annan criticized the Human Rights Council for its “disproportionate focus on violations by Israel.”

Should Israel comply with international law and the mores and values of the international community? Yes. Does it? Yes, yes, it does. And like every Nation, however, it enjoys the right to self-defense.

This troubled history is exactly why I'm skeptical that the United Nations will treat Israel justly now. What happened on Mavi Marmara needs a real investigation, not one colored by years of one-sided bias.

Mr. Speaker, despite what happened last Monday, the fundamentals of this conflict remain just as they were the day before. The overwhelming majority of Israelis want to live in peace with the Palestinians side-by-side in two States. So I believe do most Palestinians, but the extremism and hate of groups like Hamas stands in the way.

In my view, Mr. Speaker, there were those on those ships who sought this confrontation. Again, not for the purposes of humanitarian relief but for propaganda and for putting Israel at risk from those who wish its destruction. It is not a secret wish. It is an articulated wish. All the world knows the intent of Hamas: to destroy Israel and remove Jews from the Middle East because they say so.

Let us not be confused, Mr. Speaker. Finding a way to peace is fiercely difficult. It should not be made more difficult by those who see more propaganda value than human values and these loss of lives.

I thank my friend from New York for leading this Special Order that is so important so that our voices are heard here and around the world as it relates to our commitment to the sovereignty, security, and safety of Israel. (*Congressional Record*)

June 2, 2010

As we wait for all the facts to emerge about Monday's events, several things are already clear. First, the loss of life was tragic. Second, Israel – rightfully so – invoked its right to self-defense on the Mavi Marmara. While the majority of ships in the flotilla – 5 out of 6 – reacted peacefully when approached by Israeli Defense Forces, activists on board the Mavi Marmara were clearly bent on a violent confrontation. They further chose this path despite two week's worth of repeated warnings from Israel that the ship would not be allowed to come ashore, and despite Israel's offer to instead receive the humanitarian goods at Ashdod, inspect them there for weapons, and ensure their distribution to Palestinians in Gaza. Finally, to the extent that this act was in protest of the Gaza blockade, let's be clear: Hamas could end the blockade at any time by recognizing Israel's right to exist, renouncing violence, and releasing Gilad Shalit.

The Administration and Congress are determined to prevent condemnation of Israel at the UN Security Council. In times of increased tension such as now, it is imperative that we not allow these events to distract from our main goals of achieving peace in the region and preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons. (*Press Release*)

### **Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-GA)**

June 4, 2010

“While the loss of life aboard the Gaza-bound ship is tragic, Israel is well within its rights to defend itself against Hamas and any terrorist organizations that continue to support violence against its people. Like so many, I continue to hope that indirect peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority will continue and that peace in the region will finally come to fruition.” ([Blog Post](#))

### **Rep. Steve Israel (D-NY)**

June 1, 2010

There is nothing humanitarian about lead pipes and knives. Israel unconditionally left Gaza and was rewarded with rocket fire. Israel established a blockade according to the rules of international law to protect itself from further rocket fire. A group of people chose to violate international law and Israel has the right to defend itself. (*Office of Rep. Steve Israel*)

**Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr. (D-IL)**

*June 4, 2010*

“I deeply regret the fatalities and injuries that were suffered during the raid by Israeli commandos of six ships heading to the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip. I hope that a fair and credible Israeli-led investigation will get to the bottom of what happened and help prevent another such deadly incident from occurring again.

“However, there can be no doubt about this fact: Israel maintains the legitimate, fundamental right to defend and protect itself. The Israeli government has an obligation to prevent the flow of weapons and fighters into Gaza, sent there for one purpose only -- to kill Israelis.

“I hope that out of this unfortunate incident comes a new opportunity --- to find a way to allow more humanitarian aid into Gaza, without threatening Israel’s security or benefiting its enemies. Now is the time to engage in the kind of intense negotiations and diplomacy that can lead to comprehensive and sustainable regional peace and security.” (*Office of Rep. Jesse Jackson*)

**Rep. Lynn Jenkins (R-KS)**

*June 2, 2010*

Israel has every right to defend itself, and it is important we not forget why the blockade exists in the first place: to deny Hamas terrorists weaponry to continue its rocket attacks in Israel, killing innocent Israelis. At this point, the true purpose behind the flotilla seems murky at best. As one of our nation’s strongest and most stable allies, it is imperative that President Obama and his administration make it clear that the United States supports Israel and pledges to veto any biased, premature U.N. resolution condemning Israel’s right to defend itself from Hamas terrorists who seek to harm innocent Israeli citizens. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Jim Jordan (R-OH)**

*June 9, 2010*

“For more than sixty years, America has had no truer friend and ally in the Middle East than Israel. I stand with the people of Israel in their right to defend their homeland. Israel, like any sovereign nation, has the right to protect their citizens, businesses, property and borders against the merciless barrage of rockets, mortars and other terrorist attacks they face every day. Like America, Israel supports giving humanitarian aid and relief to those in need, but opposes terrorists gaining access to arms and weapons, which leads to instability in a volatile part of the world.

Like America, Israel seeks stability and prosperity for its people. Though surrounded by sworn enemies determined to wipe it off the map, Israel continues to lead by example in a region that desperately needs to promote democracy, freedom, and human rights. My thoughts are with those impacted by the tragedy and my prayers are for peace in a region that has been the center of the Jewish tradition since before the days of King David and King Solomon.” *(Press Release)*

**Sen. Mike Johanns (R-NE)**

June 3, 2010

The loss of life that occurred is tragic, but the worldwide rush to judgment is wrong and unfair. The evidence is now becoming clear that this was an intentional effort to provoke Israel and spur a harsh international reaction. The U.S. must not play into the hands and plans of terrorists.

Israel has offered to provide a secure means of transferring aid to Gaza, including a pathway for this shipment, yet this Turkish-sponsored ship instead attempted to break the blockage. As revealed on video, the ship’s passengers attacked Israeli naval personnel. Recognizing that Israel has previously found massive quantities of weapons onboard ships bound for Gaza, there should be no question about its right to inspect incoming ships.

Israel is a good friend and democratic ally. The U.S. must stand behind Israel and its right to protect the Israeli people. *(Press Release)*

**Sen. John Kerry (D-MA)**

June 5, 2010

Israel has every right in the world to make certain that weapons are not being smuggled in after the thousands of rockets that have been fired on it from Gaza.

And Israel has every right in the world, as recognized by the international community -- because it is not just Israel conducting this blockade; it is Israel and Egypt. So you begin that Israel has this right to protect itself. *(ABC – This Week)*

**Rep. Peter King (R-NY)**

June 3, 2010

I strongly stand with Israel in the flotilla crisis.

It is regretful but not surprising that world opinion once again blames Israel for the flotilla incident that occurred over the weekend. Common sense tells us this was no humanitarian mission to Gaza. Humanitarians and peace activists do not arm themselves with knives, clubs,

and other weapons. This was, without a doubt, a premeditated act with the intention of provoking the Israeli military into a confrontation (which it did) in the hopes of ending the naval blockade of Gaza. And even though Israel took every reasonable and legal step that was appropriate to prevent the ship from reaching Gaza, even offering to off-load the cargo and transfer it after being inspected for military contraband, it was rebuffed.

Israel must have the right to defend itself. The embargo is in place to prevent rockets, munitions, and other materials from getting into the hands of Hamas, a terrorist organization that calls for the destruction of Israel and just this week launched rockets at Israeli cities. Israel seeks only peace and security with its neighbors but unfortunately Hamas and its supporters do not have the same goals. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Mark Kirk (R-IL)**

*June 8, 2010*

As a democracy, Israel has a right to defend her borders from Hamas terrorists and their Iranian sponsors. Without Israel's quarantine of Hamas terrorist weapons, Gaza would become a missile farm and those missiles would be used. We should not allow a heavily armed "Hamasistan" to rise. (*Office of Rep. Mark Kirk*)

**Rep. Ron Klein (D-FL)**

*June 1, 2010*

Knowing of your concern about the importance of Israeli security, I wanted to make sure you saw my statements about recent events.

Israel has the right—indeed, the obligation—to defend itself. With a ship threatening to breach Israel's defenses of its coastal border, Israel was left with no choice but to ensure the safety of its people.

Those on board the ship were attempting to bolster the terrorist Hamas government in Gaza. Hamas, financed and trained by Iran and unacceptably excused by some members of the international community, poses a grave threat against the people of Israel.

Make no mistake: Israeli service members were beaten and stabbed while trying to peacefully escort the ship to an Israeli port where any legitimate humanitarian aid could be transferred to the people of Gaza.

The flotilla activists have committed great treason against the human rights movement. They have refused to recognize the unbearable suffering of the Israeli and Palestinian people at the hands of Hamas. Further, they have poisoned the reputation of legitimate human rights activists by using peace as a cover for provocation and violence.

As Israel continues to be unjustly challenged on the international stage, the United States must continue its efforts to stand up for Israel's self-defense.

I also urge the international community to recognize that this incident serves Iran's purposes by distracting the world from Iran's real threat against global security. The world cannot and should not fall into that trap." (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Doug Lamborn (R-CO)**

*June 5, 2010*

"The loss of life is regrettable. However, as the facts have unfolded in recent days, it appears those on board the Mavi Marmara may not have had peaceful intentions, as evidenced by the violence directed toward the IDF soldiers. This incident was intended to provoke Israel and drive a wedge between Israel and her allies.

"Israel is under constant threat from terrorist groups and has the right to defend herself and protect her borders. As Israel continues to enforce her blockade around Gaza, we cannot forget that Hamas is a terrorist organization publicly committed to destroying Israel.

"The United States must continue to stand by our close friend and ally." (*Press Release*)

**Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ)**

*June 10, 2010*

Israel has every right to defend itself and enforce its blockade against the terrorist Hamas government in Gaza. The organizations operating the Flotilla made their intention to violate the blockade clear and refused Israel's repeated offers to process the aid through appropriate channels. Clearly, there were people aboard the lead ship who were intent on violence and sparked the tragic events. I hope that those who want to support the people of Gaza will condemn terrorist groups such as Hamas and the tactics of violence that led to this tragedy. (*Office of Sen. Frank Lautenberg*)

**Sen. Carl Levin (D-MI)**

*June 3, 2010*

"Israel has the right under international law to set up a naval blockade to keep weapons from being sent to Hamas. Hamas is an organization that is listed by our State Department as a terrorist organization and that controls Gaza, indiscriminately attacks Israeli citizens and cities with rockets, and denies Israel's very right to exist.

“While all the facts are not yet known, it seems clear that the organizers of the flotilla, particularly those on the Mavi Marmara, set out intentionally to use force to challenge the blockade. This confrontation and the tragic loss of life could have been avoided had the organizers of the flotilla agreed to Israel’s repeated offers to accept the humanitarian aid at an Israeli port and transfer it overland to Gaza under the supervision of those in the flotilla.

“An in-depth investigation is underway. But even as it is taking place, one thing is clear – the need to proceed, despite all the setbacks, with negotiations that can lead to a comprehensive agreement which has two states living side-by-side in peace.” (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Jerry Lewis (R-CA)**

*June 10, 2010*

Mr. Speaker, Israel has the right and the duty to defend itself and its citizens. Part of its defense includes seeking to inspect ships run by Islamist extremist groups. These extremists were seeking to enter Hamas-controlled Gaza despite repeated requests from the Israeli government not to do so.

I am very concerned by these recent events that have occurred in the Mediterranean Sea. As we now know, on Monday, May 31, the Israel Defense Forces intercepted six ships, known as the “Free Gaza” flotilla. We have learned that this flotilla attempted to break Israel’s blockade of the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip. Although many have said that its primary aim was to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza, it seems apparent that its main objective was to provoke Israel and disrupt the blockade. More than a million tons of humanitarian aid and medical supplies have entered Gaza through the Port of Ashod and other already established routes. The blockade was set in place to prevent weapons from being smuggled into Gaza. Although I am deeply saddened by the loss of human life that occurred during the interception of the flotilla, I do feel that the Israeli soldiers had every right to defend their lives against a hostile group who attacked them with clubs and knives.

The United States must stand by Israel and its right to self defense. (*Congressional Record*)

**Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-CT)**

*June 3, 2010*

We should be very clear about who is responsible for the unfortunate loss of life in the attempt to break the blockade in Gaza. Hamas and its allies are the responsible parties for the recent violence and the continued difficulties for the people of Gaza. Israel exercised her legitimate right of self defense.

The blockade exists because Hamas, which is increasingly acting as a proxy for the Iranian regime, has fired thousands of rockets upon Israel even after Israel withdrew from Gaza. The flotilla was a clear provocation and was not an effort to improve the lives of the people of Gaza but rather an attempt to score political propaganda points. The Palestinian people have legitimate rights to a state that is a peaceful neighbor of Israel, but those who assist Hamas only undermine that goal and a peaceful resolution. Support of Hamas and its aims is not the humanitarian path to peace, but rather enables continued violence and conflict.

I appreciate the way in which the Obama Administration has refused to join the international herd that has rushed to convict Israel before the facts were known and has apparently forgotten that Israel is a democratic nation and Hamas is a terrorist group. At difficult moments like this, it is more important than ever for the U.S. to stand steadfastly with our democratic ally, Israel.  
*(Press Release)*

**Rep. Frank A. LoBiondo (R-NJ)**

*June 3, 2010*

I strongly support Israel's right to defend itself, and stand side-by-side with Israel against those who condemn their justified defensive action. I strongly condemn the action of those who assaulted the Israeli troops which resulted in the loss of life, including that of an American teenager.

I believe the fault and ultimate responsibility lies with the organizers of the flotilla who attempted to break through Israel's legitimate defenses against terrorist-controlled Gaza. If the true intent was humanitarian, their goods could easily and readily have been delivered to Gaza through the Israeli port of Ashdod, as done previously with other vessels. It is clear the intent was not purely humanitarian but rather intended to provoke a confrontation with the Israeli Navy. Israel was right to defend itself against such provocation and aggression.

Daily, Israel and her people are confronted with rocket-fired grenades and arms fire from Hamas-controlled Gaza. I strongly believe and support the efforts of Israel to protect its people, including its naval blockade and closure of access points into Israel from Gaza. This week's efforts by Israel's Navy, though regrettable in terms of lives lost, were justified, legal, and necessary to protect Israel from such continuous threats. *(Press Release)*

**Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY)**

*June 9, 2010*

Mr. Speaker, let there be no doubt in anyone's mind: Israel has the right to defend herself and the responsibility to protect her citizens from Hamas, which denies Israel's right to exist and rains rockets down on its citizens.

While Israel reviews the Gaza flotilla incident and considers the best way to implement the Gaza blockade, we must not forget that failure to prevent weapons and other illicit materials from reaching Hamas would be a dereliction of Israel's most basic responsibility to its people. I stand firmly in support of Israel's right to self-defense and am committed to maintaining Israel's qualitative military edge so she can continue to defend her citizens.

As the 'Blame Israel First' crowd continues to attack our democratic ally Israel over a host of challenges in the Middle East, I am reminded of a simple--yet powerful--concept: words matter. The inflammatory rhetoric surrounding events in the Middle East in recent weeks and months only begets more hostility; discourages efforts toward a lasting peace agreement, which the people of Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza deserve; and can incite those encouraging violence against Israel.

The Administration focused today on humanitarian and development assistance to strengthen the Palestinian Authority so it can serve as a viable partner in peace to Israel. Abu Mazen must make clear to all the Palestinian people that their security and a prosperous future depends on rejecting Hamas, recognizing Israel and working with the international community and Israel to achieve a two state solution.

Despite the current, tense environment, some positive steps have been taken that will improve Israel's security as well as bolster U.S. national security interests.

Iran continues to be an existential threat to Israel, the region and the world, and I am pleased today's agreement by the U.N. Security Council to impose multilateral sanctions on Iran will hold the regime accountable for its reckless pursuit of nuclear weapons. I look forward to Congress finalizing strong bilateral sanctions and urge European partners and other responsible countries to do the same.

We must continue to strongly support the U.S.-Israel partnership which provides invaluable benefits to both of our countries national security.

The administration focused today on humanitarian and development assistance to strengthen the Palestinian Authority so it can serve as a viable partner in peace to Israel. But Abu Mazen must make clear to all the Palestinian people that their security and prosperous future--and we've seen an 11 percent growth in the West Bank--depends on rejecting Hamas, recognizing Israel, and working with the international community and Israel to achieve a two-state solution.

Despite the current tense environment, some positive steps have been taken that will improve Israel's security as well as bolster U.S. national security interests. Iran continues to be an existential threat to Israel, the region, and the world. I am pleased today's agreement by the U.N. Security Council to impose multilateral sanctions on Iran will hold the regime accountable for its reckless pursuit of nuclear weapons, and I look forward to Congress finalizing strong bilateral sanctions and urge European partners and other responsible countries to do the same.

We must continue to strongly support the U.S.-Israeli partnership which provides invaluable benefits to both of our countries' national securities. (*Congressional Record*)

June 1, 2010

Israel has the right to inspect and reject illicit material being shipped to Gaza, which is controlled by a terrorist organization intent on destroying Israel and harming its people. The loss of life and injuries to flotilla participants and Israeli soldiers is regrettable. The international community should wait until the facts are known – including the actions of flotilla organizers and participants – before rushing to assign blame for this incident.

This incident should not distract from the most pressing issues facing the international community – working cooperatively to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear capabilities, and developing a lasting peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Connie Mack (R-FL)**

June 1, 2010

Since September 11th here in the United States, we have understood the necessity for increased surveillance of materials coming into our airports, seaports and borders. We recognize that screening for materials that can be used by terrorists to endanger our security must be a top priority.

The terrorist regime Hamas rules over Gaza through force and remains a constant military threat to the safety and security of Israel and her people. Just as it is wise for us in the United States to ensure that cargo coming into our country is safe, so is it prudent for Israel to do the same and ensure that only non-military supplies are going into Gaza.

However, yesterday's flotilla was designed to avoid scrutiny. They could have had their materials sent through approved channels like the United Nations or the Red Cross, but instead, they chose to avoid the blockade and ship their materials directly to the terrorist-run regime in Gaza.

Like the United States, Israel has every right to ensure its own safety and security. If those who sent the flotilla wanted these materials to go to Gaza for humanitarian aid, as they claimed, then they would have sent them through approved channels. It's clear that this was a publicity stunt geared to break legitimate port security laws.

Israel acted courageously on its own behalf. The Obama Administration should stand with Israel and support their right to keep their nation safe and secure. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Dan Maffei (D-NY)**

*June 9, 2010*

Mr. Speaker, I want to address exactly what the gentleman from New York (Mr. Weiner) was talking about and, that is, Iran's involvement and what we can do about it. Indeed, it has been since 2007 that Israel, along with Egypt, has instituted this blockade of the Gaza strip to stop individuals from smuggling weapons, and over the course of the blockade, as we have already talked about, Israeli defense forces have diverted numerous ships, all without incident. Nobody ever wishes for fatalities or injuries to occur during the enforcement of a blockade, but the fundamental thing to understand is that Israel has the same right to self-defense as any country.

Days before the incident, Israel notified Turkey and other governments participating that it would not allow flotillas to breach the blockade at Gaza, and as Mr. Weiner indicated at the beginning of this hour, humanitarian aid was allowed to be off-loaded in the Port of Ashdod.

I am confident that the Israeli government will conduct a full and credible investigation regarding this incident, and it is imperative that we draw on the special relationship that endures between the United States and Israel and continue to stand by our ally.

But I'm even more concerned that the media circus surrounding this incident may distract us from the real threat that Iran continues to pose, not just to Israel, not even just to its neighbors, but to the entire world, including the United States. The blockade was largely due to Iran's continued efforts to smuggle weapons, and we must keep an eye on that.

Now, in fact, the U.N. Security Council actually passed a resolution today, Resolution 1929, which imposes new sanctions against Iran because of its suspected nuclear weapon program, the Revolutionary Guard, ballistic missiles, and nuclear-related investments. The resolution does expand on three previous sanctions on Iran by strengthening and expanding existing measures and breaking ground in several new areas.

What the majority leader said about the United Nations is correct. We must always be somewhat skeptical about their resolutions. So the fact that even the United Nations is now passing this resolution should indicate a strong message about how dangerous Iran continues to be.

It is increasingly important that the United States stand with the State of Israel and impose even stronger sanctions than the U.N. has. A nuclear-capable Iran poses a major threat to the entire world. By combining a nuclear weapon with a current missile program, Tehran would be capable of targeting American troops and its allies throughout the Middle East and beyond.

Iran is one of the leading sponsors of terrorism and continues to spout anti-Semitic rhetoric regarding the State of Israel. President Obama has stated all options should remain on the table for dealing with Iran. However, currently tough sanctions that are strictly enforced remain the best option to try to persuade Iran's leaders to do away with their nuclear program.

Both Chambers of the 111th Congress have already passed Iran sanctions legislation. Currently, the conference committee has been working on reconciling these different bills. The legislation would increase pressure on Iran by restricting their ability to purchase or refine petroleum products. Despite being one of the largest producers of crude oil in the world, Iran lacks adequate refining capability to meet its own domestic needs for gasoline.

I believe only a consistent and appropriately tough sanctions policy will give the level of pressure on the current despotic State of Iran that has any chance of persuading Iran to drop its nuclear ambitions. The refusal of Iran to accept the existence of the State of Israel helped lead to the unrest in Gaza which helped lead to this incident.

The U.N. Security Council resolution is a good step, but America has an obligation to lead and not just follow. (*Congressional Record*)

**Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY)**

June 15, 2010

Mr. Speaker, I rise to join my colleagues in expressing support for the State of Israel . Israel is a tiny country that has been under attack since its founding 62 years ago. Nonetheless, it has developed into a vigorous democracy. With a free and active press, freedom of religion, free elections and a free and independent judiciary, Israelis of all religions and nationalities enjoy rights and opportunities unimaginable elsewhere in the Middle East.

Israel is our strongest and most reliable friend in the Middle East. Israel is a strategic ally, helping to improve American anti-terrorism efforts, working with the US military to improve training, intelligence gathering, research and development, preparedness and protection of travel and trade.

Despite the threats against it, Israel's economy is thriving, in large part as a result of her agricultural, technological and medical innovations. Israel constitutes a fraction of 1 percent of the land mass and only 2 percent of the population of the Middle East. Nonetheless, Israel far outshines much of the world in terms of academic, scientific and technological achievement. Israel has the highest ratio of university degrees per capita in the world and produces more scientific papers and more books per capita than any other nation in the world. It is the only nation in the world that has had a net increase in the number of trees. Israel has transformed itself from an impoverished backwater to a gleaming modern nation, ranking among the very highly developed countries of the world.

The threat against Israel is growing. Hezbollah, along Israel's Northern border with Lebanon, is heavily armed with increasingly powerful weapons. Hamas, along the Gaza Strip, is vocal about its determination to destroy the Jewish State. And the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank is refusing to pursue direct talks with Israel , believing that they will get a better deal if the United States or other countries do the negotiating for them. Fatah leaders and the Abbas-controlled official media of the Palestinian authority continue to deny Israel's existence.

The recent Gaza flotilla in which armed thugs challenged Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip makes clear that Israel is facing a clear and present danger. If the blockade is broken, weapons will flow freely into Hamas's hands. In the years preceding the blockade, Hamas launched more than 8,000 missiles at civilian targets in Israel, killing and injuring thousands. If the blockade is lifted without a peace agreement, Israel's cities and towns can expect the bombardment to resume.

Israel has to be vigilant in defense of its borders. The stated desire of Hamas and many Fatah leaders is to wipe Israel off the face of the world. When the world condemns Israel for defending its population, they are currying favor with terrorists at the expense of a democratic nation. And condemning Israel makes peace much less probable. I hope the Obama Administration will continue to make clear that Israel has no obligation to lift the blockade, and that it is Hamas and its terrorist allies who are responsible for the situation in Gaza.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to join my colleagues in strongly expressing my support for Israel.  
*(Congressional Record)*

June 2, 2010

I truly sympathize with the families of those who were killed or injured on the Mavi Marmara, but the fault lies with those who incited violence, not with those who defended Israel's borders. Israel had offered to have the flotilla land at Ashdod and have the humanitarian aid trucked to Gaza after being searched. The organizers rejected the offer. The family of Gilad Shalit asked the flotilla to carry a letter to their son who has been kept hostage in the Gaza Strip. The organizers rejected the request. The Gaza flotilla was clearly intended to generate international pressure to force Israel to relax its blockade and forego inspections of cargo destined for the Gaza Strip. But, all too often 'humanitarian' efforts have given cover to weapons running and terrorism.

Videos of the incident support the fact that many of the activists on Mavi Marmara had planned a violent attack. The footage reveals that the Mavi Marmara carried dozens of wooden and metal batons, knives (and there is footage of one knife drenched in blood), flame throwers, infrared night vision goggles, slingshots and flares. These are strange implements for a non-violent expedition. The video shows Israeli soldiers being attacked with sticks, chairs, knives and other implements. One soldier is thrown head first over the side of the deck. The people who attacked the soldiers were anything but non-violent, and they clearly intended to cause grievous bodily harm to the soldiers they were attacking. *(Press Release)*

**Rep. Doris Matsui (D-CA)**

June 15, 2010

I rise today to express my support for our ally and friend Israel. Israel is a country that has always backed the United States in its efforts to combat extremism, and that has proven

throughout its short history that democratic ideals can take root in the most challenging of international neighborhoods.

Madam Speaker, I, like so many of my colleagues here in the House of Representatives and like so many of my constituents in Sacramento, believe in Israel's right to defend itself. The people of Israel deserve to live without fear of being attacked by a terrorist organization— Hamas—that refuses both to recognize Israel's right to exist and to renounce the use of violence to achieve its objectives. For a number of years, both Israel and Egypt have enforced a blockade of Gaza to keep Hamas from acquiring material to launch rockets into Israel.

The recent tragedy aboard the Mavi Marmara could have been avoided, and should serve as a reminder to us all that our nation must lead the international community in efforts to forge a lasting peace in the Middle East. My heart goes out to the families of those whose lives were lost, and to those Israeli soldiers who were seriously injured.

Prior to what took place on the Mavi Marmara, five previous ships in the flotilla bound for Gaza were redirected without incident. These five ships were sent to an Israeli port so that the goods they were carrying could be screened for material that could be used to make weapons. Much of their cargo has since been sent to Gaza.

Israel redirected five of the flotilla ships because it has the right—and the responsibility—to prevent Hamas from acquiring materials it uses to fire rockets at Israeli towns. At the same time, Israel must continue doing what it can to ensure that the people of Gaza have access to food and supplies needed to live. Much of the humanitarian material the flotilla was carrying will make it into the hands of innocent civilians in Gaza, just as millions of tons of humanitarian aid have been delivered to Gaza through Israel since the start of the blockade.

Madam Speaker, what this incident demonstrates more than anything else is that a lasting Middle East peace is needed. For a peace settlement to be reached, the first step is for Hamas to meet a very simple set of preconditions established by the Quartet (the United Nations, the United States, the European Union, and Russia).

The Quartet's demands are not complicated: Hamas must join the rest of the international community by recognizing Israel's right to exist, renounce the use of violence, and abide by previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinian people. If Hamas were to do so, the Gaza blockade would end, Israel's security would improve, and peace negotiations could begin in earnest.

In the end, we should use this most recent tragedy as a catalyst to redouble our international efforts to achieve peace and security in the Middle East. Our objective must not change: we must create a peace that dismantles Hamas's terrorist infrastructure, improves the situation in Gaza, and guarantees the safety and security of innocent Israelis and Palestinians alike. The United States has been attempting to broker just such an agreement via proximity talks for months now.

Furthermore, the United States' goodwill toward the people who live in Gaza is clear. The President's announcement of a \$400 million initiative to improve Gazans' access to drinking

water, create jobs, build schools, make affordable housing more accessible, and address critical health and infrastructure needs is just the kind of thing we need to change direction in the Middle East. I strongly support the President's initiative because I want the living conditions for the people of Gaza to improve just as I want living conditions for all people around the world to improve.

As an international community, we all need to examine our various approaches to achieving peace in the Middle East, to see if any calibrations can be made in our strategies that will increase the chances of success. The tragedy on the Mavi Marmara only underscores how urgent it is for the international system to do everything it can to protect the security of Israelis, meet the humanitarian and economic needs of the people in Gaza, and create a permanent peace in this critical part of the world.

I will continue to support Israel's right to defend itself and its citizens. At the same time, I long for the day when Israel and the Palestinians can live peacefully with one another, because that will mean that our efforts to achieve a viable peace agreement in the Middle East have been successful.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. (*Congressional Record*)

**Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY)**

June 9, 2010

“This was a premeditated attack, intended to provoke a response and purposely initiate a violent confrontation. We know that those on the flotilla had terrorist ties to Hamas and to Iran and that Israel warned the boats that they were in violation of a lawful blockade and offered them safe harbor, where all humanitarian aid would be off-loaded and delivered to Gaza. It is striking how quick the world looked to blame Israel for this incident but as the details have emerged, it has become clear that the Israeli military attempted to resolve the situation peacefully and in accordance with international law.

I fully support Israel and their right to keep its people safe. It is my sincere hope that this incident will not deter our country and the international community from the need to continue to support Israel, recognize its right to exist, and take the steps required to advance the peace process. Israel is a longstanding ally and friend of the United States and we should continue to do whatever we can to support Israel and ensure that intentional challenges to its security are resolved quickly and peacefully.

These Israeli service members were beaten and stabbed while just trying to escort the ship to port. Those on board the ship were trying to help a recognized terrorist group, Hamas. And Iran has offered to escort future flotillas. Iran is a threat not just to the United States or Israel but the world and is a real threat against global safety. We cannot just sit and watch Iran.” (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA)**

June 9, 2010

"Any discussion regarding Israel's security should not involve rhetoric that would weaken its right to defend itself. Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip is for its defense and the protection of its citizens. Israel remains under constant threat from those that oppose its existence and actively seek its destruction. As America's strongest ally in the region, it is imperative that we support Israel's right to self defense because we know that a strong and secure Israeli state is in both of our national security interests. The Administration should be quick to remember the thousands of rockets that were fired from Gaza and be slow to tell Israel how to protect itself." (*Press Release*)

**Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY)**

June 8, 2010

Well, look. It is entirely appropriate for Israel to have a boycott.

Peaceful boarding and searching of these ships is entirely appropriate. And I can understand why the Israelis, having had the luck they've had in the past with international organizations, are not wildly interested, frankly, in having some international organization review the actions that occurred before -- on board the ship recently.

The Israelis will investigate, I'm sure, as we would investigate a similar situation if we were involved in it.

Since that boarding there's been a second boarding that was handled without incident. No one on the ship shot back.

I think the Israelis in this particular instance, to, sort of, jump to criticism before we actually know who started the incident, have been subjected once again to the kind of unfair criticism that they are almost always subjected to on every occasion when there's some kind of threat to Israeli security. (*Press Conference*)

**Rep. Howard "Buck" McKeon (R-CA)**

June 3, 2010

I do not believe the flotilla was serving the cause of peace. Rather than planning ways to embarrass Israel and provide support to a terrorist regime, I would hope peace activists would encourage all sides to come to the bargaining table to seek a lasting peace. (*Press Release*)

The United States and Israel enjoy a special relationship, and that bond will weather this storm. In order to respond to nearly constant attacks, Israel has a right to defend itself and impose a blockade to stop the flow of weapons to its enemies.

While I regret the loss of life in this incident, I am confident that the Israeli government will adequately review its policies and procedures to ensure an adequate balance between its own legitimate security concerns and its desire to respect human rights.

Finally, it's alarming that the United Nations would move without delay to condemn these actions even before knowing the facts while remaining silent in the aftermath of North Korea's blatant aggression that left 46 South Koreans dead. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Michael E. McMahon (D-NY)**

*June 9, 2010*

Mr. Speaker, Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East, is our strong ally and true friend. Innocent Israelis endure attacks far too often.

Unfortunately, following the May 31 flotilla incident, Israel has come under assault in the media and international community once again.

This has resulted in a particularly sad time for the historically strong partnership between Israel and Turkey. As a bridge between East and West, Turkey is a source of dialogue between cultures, particularly for the Jewish people, who have lived in Turkey for more than five hundred years. This history has characterized the special relationship between these two countries since the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. For this reason, Prime Minister Erdogan's brazen rhetoric, support for the terrorist group, Hamas, and today's decision to vote against sanctions in the Security Council are misguided and thoroughly disappointing.

It is unfortunate that a leader, who once opened his country's doors to all of its neighbors, now chooses to follow the radical, fundamentalist maneuvers of groups like the IHH, instead of practicing the diplomacy for which it has been known.

Despite what Hamas supporters may be claiming now, the May 31, 2010 flotilla incident wasn't about bringing in supplies. It was about provoking Israel, a country whose people have been subject to countless terrorist attacks from Hamas supporters in the Gaza Strip. No one should be led astray, Hamas is a terrorist organization that stands for the annihilation of Israel and should not and cannot be accepted as a legitimate voice in Gaza. And, Just as America protects its borders, Israel--and any other country--has the right to maintain and defend its own borders.

Since Israel instituted its Gaza blockade, terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians have dramatically decreased, and it is not hard to see how the Israeli government would perceive the flotilla's actions as a direct confrontation. Primarily, though, we need to remain focused on what really threatens the shared interests of all democratic countries--a nuclear armed Iran. This is

why I believe it is in our country's best interest to lower tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean. Turkey has unfortunately disappointed the global community today with its vote in the UN Security Council, but the passage of the sanctions package is an overwhelming victory for the United States, Israel and the overall security of the international community. (*Congressional Record*)

June 2, 2010

Just as America protects its borders, Israel - and any other country - has the right to maintain and defend its own borders. Despite what Hamas supporters may be claiming now, Monday's incident wasn't about bringing in supplies. It was about provoking Israel, a country whose people have been subject to countless terrorist attacks from Hamas supporters in the Gaza Strip.

Since Israel instituted its Gaza blockade, these attacks have dramatically decreased, and it is not hard to see how the Israeli government would perceive the flotilla's actions as a direct confrontation. I fully support a transparent investigation by the Israeli government as to why these deaths occurred.

Primarily, though, we need to remain focused on what really threatens the shared interests of all democratic countries – a nuclear armed Iran. This is why I believe it is in our country's best interest to lower tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean and encourage diplomacy between Turkey and Israel. (*Press Release*)

**Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ)**

June 9, 2010

“I understand the need for the Israelis to maintain this blockade. If the blockade were to be broken, it would be impossible to tell which vessels were carrying humanitarian supplies and which were carrying deadly rockets. The bottom line is that the attempt to prevent materials that could be used against Israel from reaching Hamas is of vital interest to Israel and to its national security, and I fully support it. We cannot allow the international reaction to this incident to legitimize Hamas, which would undermine our search for a lasting peace that would create security for Israel and a Palestinian state.” (*Office of Sen. Robert Menendez*)

**Rep. Kendrick Meek (D-FL)**

June 1, 2010

Israel has the right and duty to defend itself and protect its citizens against all threats. As a security precaution, Israel was well within its rights to search the cargo and passengers of a ship on the verge of breaching its sovereign borders, despite repeated requests from the Israeli government to stop.

The loss of life is always tragic, but we must not be fooled: the passengers aboard the ship have done great harm to the human rights movement by using the name of peace as a pretense for violence against Israeli soldiers. The ship's passengers could have allowed Israeli service members to escort their ship to a port peacefully to transfer aid to the people living in Hamas-controlled Gaza, but instead resorted to aggression and hostility.

Israeli soldiers cannot be blamed for defending themselves and their citizens. I will not allow Israel to be blamed unfairly for exercising its right to self-defense. *(Press Release)*

**Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski (D-MD)**

June 3, 2010

Israel's internal investigation will tell us the facts and circumstances that led to the tragic loss of life and injury off the coast of Gaza. But two things are clear. First, Israel, like all countries, has the right to self-defense. Second, Hamas has clearly stated its goal is the destruction of the State of Israel.

Uninspected ships can contain anything from missiles to dirty bombs. That's why Israel offered to inspect the ships and allow humanitarian aid to be delivered as they have so many times in the past. Yet those aboard the Mavi Marmara cared more about inciting a confrontation than they did about delivering aid. This is clearly a provocative act. Those concerned about the people of Gaza must press Hamas to recognize Israel's right to exist and renounce violence. *(Press Release)*

**Rep. Christopher Murphy (D-CT)**

June 9, 2010

"Israel has the right to defend itself and manage its security interests, but something clearly went wrong during this particular operation. Details critical to our understanding of this incident are still emerging, so all sides should refrain from a rush to judgment until we have a comprehensive and transparent investigation." *(Office of Rep. Christopher Murphy)*

**Rep. Patrick Murphy (D-PA)**

June 2, 2010

"While we wait for all the facts about Monday's events, it's important to remember what we already know. First, Israel is America's greatest friend and ally in the Middle East, and our two countries have enjoyed a special relationship for the past six decades.

Further, while any loss of life is deeply regrettable, Israel has the right and responsibility to self-defense. They invoked this right on board the Mavi Marmara against activists who, unlike those on the other 5 ships in the flotilla, clearly intended to have a violent confrontation despite repeated and prolonged warnings from Israel that they would not be permitted ashore. Underscoring the difficult balance Israel seeks, extremists in Gaza fired two rockets on Israeli civilians later that day.

The flotilla incident itself is an unfortunate distraction from the underlying challenges facing the region, primarily the need to achieve peace in the region and to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.”

**Rep. Jerry Moran (R-KS)**

*June 2, 2010*

Israel has a right to defend itself, including by enforcing a legal blockade to prevent the smuggling of weapons that can be used by Hamas to kill Israeli civilians,” Moran said. “Israel offered the flotilla the opportunity to dock in Israel and have the aid delivered to Gaza. Unfortunately, the flotilla chose otherwise; the intent was to provoke a confrontation with Israel rather than deliver material to Gaza. President Obama should make it clear that the U.S. supports Israel’s right to defend itself against terrorists. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-NY)**

*June 9, 2010*

It has been absolutely galling to watch the hypocrisy and the fury, the underserved fury directed at Israel for taking a step in its own self-defense. The so-called “Freedom flotilla,” which went to break the blockade of Gaza, had to be intercepted. Israel and Egypt have been blockading Gaza. They’ve been blockading it not as humanitarian materials. Thousands and thousands of tons of humanitarian materials and food and supplies go through the checkpoints into Gaza every month by truck. But ships can carry anything.

Israel has stopped ships on the high seas carrying rockets to Gaza. When they were challenged and the Israeli government urged the Turks not to allow this flotilla to sail the way it was--and the Chinese by the way had this right. The Chinese press a day or two before the flotilla was intercepted printed the headline: “Turkey Challenges Israel.” Not Israel challenges Turkey. Turkey Challenges Israel by sending these ships knowing that the goal was to break the blockade, not to deliver humanitarian aid.

When the Israelis made clear to the people on board the ships that if you land in Ashdod we will send all the materials straight through to Gaza except for any weapons we find, Greta Berlin, the head of the organization sponsoring it, said, no, we’re not interested in delivering humanitarian aid.

They were in armed rocket range. Twelve miles, to be precise. Greta Berlin said, no, the aim is to break the blockade.

Now, a lot of people, a lot of countries were saying, the President of France, “How dare they intercept ships on the high seas.” “This is piracy,” said Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey.

Well, the law is very clear. If you are fighting someone--and Israel is fighting Hamas; Hamas controls the territory and has declared war on Israel and said that war will not stop until Israel is destroyed, maybe a ceasefire from time to time, but this war must continue until Israel is destroyed, as far as Hamas is concerned--then you are subject to blockade. That is a tactic of war.

And in a blockade, you can board the ship, you can, in fact, sink the ship if that’s the only way to enforce the blockade, in international waters as long as it’s clear that it’s going to a blockaded area. And that’s from the U.S. Naval Commander’s Handbook.

But why was this being done? Because, we are told, they have to break the blockade. Why do they have to break the blockade? Because the overall issue is that we must end the Israeli occupation. This is the real sin. This is why so many people think that Israel is wrong: Because it must end the occupation.

People forget how the occupation started. The occupation of Gaza and the West Bank started when Israel resisted a war of aggression aimed at its extermination in 1967. But we are ignorant of history. History started 5 years ago.

Israel wants to end the occupation. Israel has offered to end the occupation, but there is a problem: Who do you give the land to?

And Israel has experience here. Israel withdrew from Lebanon in 2006, and the U.N. said, “We will send peacekeeping troops, and they will enforce Resolution 1701 to prevent the importation of rockets and arms.” And what happened? There are 40,000 missiles in the possession of Hezbollah in Lebanon today because the U.N. peacekeepers stand aside. And Israel has learned that she cannot depend on the U.N. or the international community or anybody else to defend her.

Gaza Israel withdrew from in 2005 and left behind agricultural establishments and other things. What happened? Hamas took over and turned it into a rocket launching pad against Israel. Over 10,000 rockets have been launched against Israel.

But Israel still wants to end the occupation. Israel wants to be left in peace. Israel offered in 2000 at Camp David, in 2001 at Taba.

And what was their offer? Israel said, “We will withdraw from the entire Gaza Strip. We will withdraw from 97 percent of the West Bank. We will give land swaps to the Palestinians to make it equivalent to 100 percent of the acreage. And we will share Jerusalem. But, in return, they have to agree that the war is over.” They wouldn’t agree, and they started the first intifada.

Prime Minister Olmert renewed the offer in 2008, but they will not agree to end of claims or to demilitarization. That's the real issue. If they would agree to that, if the Palestinians would agree that the West Bank cannot be used--if they gave it back, that the West Bank would not be used as a rocket launching pad, that Gaza would not be used as a rocket launching pad, that Israel could live in peace if she withdrew, that deal could be made. And it could be made; it's been offered.

And until the Palestinians are willing to live in peace and are willing to talk about it--the Palestinians, even Abbas, won't even talk to the Israelis now, only to the Americans. Until they are willing to talk and make that agreement, the occupation will continue, and it will be the fault of the Palestinians, not the Israelis. (*Congressional Record*)

June 1, 2010

Monday's violence was a sad but predictable result of the deliberate provocation on the part of the 'Freedom Flotilla' organizers. Knowing full well that Israel could not permit the Gaza blockade to be forcefully defied, the Flotilla purposely initiated a violent confrontation. But Israel has the right to enforce a blockade in order to keep weapons from the Hamas terrorists in Gaza.

The Israelis made it clear that they would allow all the supplies on the Flotilla - except any weapons or military materials - into Gaza if the Flotilla first landed in Israel and permitted Israeli inspection. The Flotilla organizers refused, re-avowing that their real aim was to 'break the blockade,' not to deliver humanitarian supplies to Gaza.

While the deaths and injuries (including Israeli Defense Force members) were a tragic result, Israel first and foremost has a responsibility to protect her citizens. The international community is seeking to embarrass Israel and highlight the blockade for public relations purposes, but continues to ignore the root problem Israel faces - continued provocation and violence by Hamas in Gaza.

The U.S. must stand up for the right of Israel to defend herself against terrorism - which is what Israel did when she blocked the attempt by the Flotilla to forcefully breach the blockade that is preventing weapons and military materials from reaching Hamas. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Glenn Nye (D-VA)**

June 9, 2010

I would like to start by thanking my colleague from New York for laying out the issue very concisely tonight and for his leadership on the issue. And, as someone who has spent a significant amount of time, myself, both in Israel and in a number of the surrounding countries, I want to rise today to reaffirm the U.S.-Israeli bond of mutual defense and security.

Our friendship gives us peace of mind in knowing that we will always have each other's support in one of the most volatile regions of the world. I maintain my strong support for Israel's right to exist and to protect herself. As the lone bastion of democracy in the region, Israel is our closest ally against terrorist groups, and I am committed to seeing our friendship continue.

The recent loss of life off the coast of Gaza is distressing. However, it is troubling that many have rushed to judgment while failing to recognize the serious security challenges Israel faces every day necessitating the Gaza blockade.

As my colleague has mentioned tonight, Hamas terrorists in Gaza launch frequent rocket attacks directed at Israeli towns than too often take the lives of innocent civilians. And, as our majority leader said earlier this evening in describing a trip that I joined him on last summer, Israeli children are forced to hide in concrete bunkers in order to have a safe place to play.

Hamas makes relentless efforts to import into Gaza, through any means possible, the parts for these deadly rockets, complicating Israel's efforts to safely allow humanitarian aid to enter Gaza.

Lasting peace between the Israelis and Palestinians requires that Israel can assure the safety of its population against terrorist threats. And that is why I recently introduced and helped pass in the House H.R. 5327, the United States-Israel Missile Defense Cooperation and Support Act.

The funds authorized by the bill will allow Israel to build two Iron Dome missile defense batteries that will help protect Israeli citizens living in cities like Sderot, who have been terrorized by over 8,000 indiscriminate rocket and mortar attacks on their homes, schools, and communities.

Mr. Speaker, U.S.-Israeli cooperation on the Iron Dome system will help advance the cause of peace by supporting Israel's ability to defend civilian areas from terrorist attacks, creating the necessary space for a successful peace process. (*Congressional Record*)

### **Rep. Pete Olson (R-TX)**

June 3, 2010

Unlike many of her international counterparts, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was correct at the outset to urge caution, and not rush to judgment until we learned the facts. We now know the facts.

“The Israeli Naval blockade is executed in accordance with international law. The blockade is necessary to prevent the flow of weapons into Gaza to be used against Israelis. The phony “peace activists” aboard the Flotilla did not want to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza, they wanted to break the blockade. The violence was instigated by the brutal terrorists aboard the ship, not the Israeli servicemen. The Israeli Naval Commandos rightly believed their lives to be in danger and responded appropriately.

“The international response is unfounded, misplaced, and outrageous. I join my colleagues in supporting Israel’s right to defend themselves and the right of the Israeli Navy to use force when attacked. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Bill Owens (D-NY)**

June 15, 2010

"First, I want to express my deep sadness about the loss of life. Like America, Israel has a responsibility to defend its borders and protect its citizens from all threats. I believe the international community should allow for all the facts to be examined instead of rushing to judgment, and I support a prompt, transparent, credible and impartial investigation conducted by Israel into this incident. It is in America’s interest, as well as the interest of Turkey and Israel, two of our strongest allies in the region, for tensions to be lowered." (*Office of Rep. Bill Owens*)

**Rep. Frank Pallone Jr. (D-NJ)**

June 2, 2010

Dear Mr. President:

I write to you concerning the recent effort by a Turkish flotilla to violate an Israeli blockade on Gaza. I believe it is vital that we support Israel’s right to defend its people and to exercise authority in ensuring dangerous resources do not reach the terrorist organization Hamas.

The loss of life and violence that unfolded is unfortunate. After repeated warnings the Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) continued to rebuff Israeli offers to deliver humanitarian aid through proper channels and challenged a standing Israeli blockade. Furthermore, it must be understood that Israeli naval personnel were attacked once boarding the ship with knives, clubs and other weapons and forced to respond.

As details continue to unfold, I urge you to instruct your administration to work within the U.N. to ensure that Israel is treated in a fair and unbiased manner. As you are aware, on September 15, 2009 the U.N. Commission on Human Rights released the Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, commonly known as the Goldstone Report. This report was one-sided and was based on a pre-judged outcome against Israel. The House of Representatives overwhelmingly supported and passed a resolution calling on you to unequivocally oppose any endorsement of the report.

The U.N. Security Council has now approved a resolution calling for an independent investigation into circumstances surrounding the incident aboard the Turkish flotilla. In the interest of fairness and to prevent another pre-judged report I urge your administration to oppose another investigation which would allow a biased outcome. Israel has offered non-provocative and non-confrontational mechanisms to ensure that aid is delivered to Gaza. In fact, the Israeli

government had offered to bring the aid on the flotilla through the port of Ashdod, in accordance with established Israeli procedures.

In addition I urge you to condemn Turkey's support of IHH which has been known to maintain ties to terrorist organizations such as Hamas and Al Qaeda. I also ask that you condemn Turkey's reaction to the incident involving the flotilla. Rather than engaging in an open dialogue, Turkey has chosen to recall their ambassador from Israel and disrupt diplomatic relations. This is the same ploy that Turkey has used against the United States and other countries when there is disagreement. Turkey has chosen to ignore the facts and force its own view of events through threat. We can not allow these same old tactics to prevent us from taking the right position.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter. (*Letter to President Obama*)

### **Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)**

June 2, 2010

"I appreciate what you are saying, that people are suffering from different physical challenges because of the blockade," Pelosi said on a conference call Tuesday, in response to a question from blogger Mike Stark. "I know that blockades have consequences. And, again, we all saw this in real time because everyone has a camera and I think that people make a case on either side as to who was provocative and who was not. But the fact is, this is a terribly regrettable situation. I regret the loss of life first and foremost and again call for a credible and transparent investigation to find out how this came to be."

... "There is a very strong interest in getting the facts," said Pelosi. "A transparent and credible investigation is what people are calling for -- that's what the White House has mentioned and that's what I support as well. We have to have the facts on which to make a judgment about how to go forward."

"Israel is our friend... I think with Israel we have a very close friendship and to have a Democratic Jewish state in that region is something that has been a goal of our foreign policy. It is something that is based on our national security interest; it is about us as much -- even more -- than it is about them. We all -- many of us here -- are striving for a two-state solution... But it has to be a solution where there is security for both sides. And hopefully President Obama will be able to use his good offices to achieve such a goal that has been bipartisan in support in Congress. But again, I believe that the specialness of our relationship with Israel has as much to do with our own national security as it does with theirs." ([The Huffington Post](#))

June 1, 2010

"I regret the loss of life and look forward to learning the facts from a credible and transparent investigation. This event underscores the urgent need for negotiations designed to achieve an enduring and comprehensive regional peace." (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN)**

June 10, 2010

We all agree the loss of life that occurred last week when a flotilla designed to challenge Israel's effective blockade of Gaza ended in military confrontation, but Israel has a right to defend itself.

The history is clear in that region. Gaza is controlled by a terrorist organization known as Hamas. Hamas used Gaza as a launching pad for thousands of rockets that killed innocent civilians in Israel. Israel responded with military force and has instituted a blockade that has saved lives in Gaza and in Israel.

There's no humanitarian crisis. Ten thousand tons of food and medical supplies are transferred into Gaza every single week.

Remarkably, yesterday, the President said it was time for Israel to sharply limit its effective blockade in Gaza saying, "The situation in Gaza is unsustainable." The truth is, Mr. President, your policy in Israel is unsustainable. The American people are on the side of Israel and Israel's right to defend herself.

Mr. President, whose side are you on? (*Congressional Record*)

June 9, 2010

As a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, I have been a strong supporter of the U.S.-Turkish alliance. I've been to Ankar, Turkey. I have met with officials there. I knew the President before he was President of Turkey.

So you can imagine my dismay, Mr. Speaker, with the recent aggressive action by Turkey toward our most cherished ally, Israel. The complicity of Turkey in launching a flotilla to challenge the blockade in Gaza, the ensuing violence that occurred, the grievous loss of life is deeply troubling to those of us who have supported the U.S.-Turkish alliance in the past.

A few things need to be said. We grieve the loss of life, but Israel has a right to defend itself, and Turkey must know that America will stand with Israel in her inviolate right to defend herself. There is no humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Ten thousand tons of food and medical supplies are transferred into Gaza every single week, and the blockade has saved lives.

Hamas used the Gaza strip to launch vicious and brutal attacks, thousands of rockets on civilians. It costs lives in Gaza. It costs lives in Israel. Turkey needs to count the cost. Turkey needs to decide whether its present course is in its long-term interests, but America will stand with Israel. (*Congressional Record*)

June 2, 2010

The nation of Israel has a right and a duty to defend her people against the attacks of a terrorist group that has repeatedly targeted innocent victims. The blockade of Gaza bolsters peace in the region by keeping weapons from reaching Hamas terrorists. This blockade helps to prevent Hamas from firing rockets and obtaining other arms that will be used to kill innocent Israeli civilians.

Israel's blockade does not interfere with the flow of humanitarian aid. In fact, Israel transfers over 10,000 tons of humanitarian supplies a week into Gaza, including basic food, clothing, medicine and shelter supplies.

“The flotilla that was stopped by Israel's navy was intended to provoke a confrontation with Israel. Several leaders connected with the flotilla have said that it was their intention to break Israel's blockade.

The United States must stand with its cherished ally Israel and defend its right to a blockade that keeps Hamas from terrorizing the region. Any loss of life is a terrible tragedy, but the U.S. must not be dissuaded by the knee-jerk reaction of Israel's critics who are seeking to use recent events to hinder Israel's right to self-defense. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Gary Peters (D-MI)**

June 1, 2010

I am saddened by the unfortunate loss of life and injuries that occurred during this incident. However, it seems that many would prefer to judge Israel rather than wait and judge the facts. I am puzzled that so many around the world are so quick to condemn Israel's acts of self-defense while they are slow to speak out on the dangerous nuclear ambitions of Iran—even as just yesterday news broke that Iran has the fuel for two nuclear weapons. I am incredulous that the U.N. Security Council can meet the same day in response to this unfortunate incident, but despite years of a growing nuclear threat from Iran the U.N. Security Council has yet to take necessary action. While Israelis live in fear of rocket attacks, and Gilad Shalit is still held hostage, there is not commensurate international outrage toward indiscriminate acts of terrorism by Hamas and Hezbollah. These issues, which threaten regional and global stability, call for much swifter and stronger action. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Todd Platts (R-PA)**

June 8, 2010

“The loss of life is always regrettable, but it is wrong for members of the international community to rush to judgment against Israel with respect to the Gaza flotilla incident. Israel has a right to protect its borders and defend itself against terrorism.

The terrorist group Hamas is engaged in a war against Israel from inside Gaza. Israel unilaterally withdrew from Gaza in 2005 in the hopes of furthering peace. Instead, Hamas consolidated its power in Gaza and launched thousands of rockets and mortar shells against innocent Israeli civilians. Israel's blockade is an act of self-defense – a necessity to deny Hamas the weaponry it needs to continue in its acts of aggression.

Reports indicate that Israel was willing to cooperate in a manner to ensure the flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza, as it has in the past. However, organizers of the flotilla appeared intent on provoking confrontation. Video has been released which seems to indicate Israeli soldiers came under violent attack first, before the Israelis switched from using paint guns to using pistols in their own apparent self-defense.

The knee-jerk condemnation of Israel by some in the world community obscures two important facts that should never be forgotten: First, Israel is a democracy and an ally of the United States with a right to protect itself. Second, Hamas is a terrorist group that refuses to recognize the right of Israel to peaceably exist. As an investigation into the specific facts of the incident proceed, we must ensure that it is both balanced and respectful of these underlying facts.” (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Ted Poe (R-TX)**

June 16, 2010

Madam Speaker, Israel has the absolute right to defend itself. It is under siege. In the north, it has the terrorist group Hezbollah; in the south, it has the terrorist group Hamas, both firing missiles into that Nation. Recently, six ships tried to break a blockade going into Gaza. Israel defends its borders and searches ships to make sure that aid going to Gaza is not from Iran and it is not weapons.

But this was not humanitarian aid workers that assaulted the Israeli commandos, where 10 of them were hurt. It turns out that their goal was, of course, to have an international incident. The reason being, after these ships were stopped and then allowed to proceed into Gaza, the humanitarian aid was denied and refused by Hamas. Obviously, an international incident that had gone bad for Hamas.

Recently, myself and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. Peters), along with 128 Members of Congress have tried to make it clear to the White House that the United States should stand with our ally Israel, that we should make it clear to Israel, to America, and the rest of the world that Israel has the absolute right to defend itself in this situation and support the blockade and support their actions of the flotilla. This should be clear to all concerned throughout the world, especially Hamas and Hezbollah.

And that's just the way it is. (*Congressional Record*)

**Rep. Tom Price (R-GA)**

June 1, 2010

Israel has every right to defend herself and protect her people,” said Chairman Price.

The loss of life in this incident is tragic, but it should not diminish our support for Israel as it faces continued threats.

I call on the President and his administration to stand strong with the Israeli people and against any effort to mislead or distort the facts surrounding this incident in an effort to stoke animosity toward Israel.

There needs to be a full and balanced investigation into how this situation escalated.

Nevertheless, our allies and our enemies alike should know that America will not tolerate those who commit or support violent actions against a friend of the United States and that commitment is resolute. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Mike Quigley (D-IL)**

June 2, 2010

In the media storm surrounding the recent Gaza flotilla incident we must not forget the larger picture. The loss of life that occurred on the flotilla was indeed tragic, but the responsibility lies with those who chose to run an internationally recognized blockade and attack uniformed personnel.

The flotilla turned down an Israeli offer to deliver the humanitarian goods through the port of Ashdod, and ignored repeated warnings that it would not be allowed to reach Gaza. Clearly the flotilla’s primary objective was not simply to deliver humanitarian aid.

Rather than offering peaceful resistance, the flotilla organizers beat, stabbed and even shot Israeli soldiers as they landed on the main ship. The reckless actions of the flotilla’s organizers do not promote peace or enhance the well being of the people of Gaza.

We must remember who rules Gaza – Hamas – a terrorist organization which has pledged to destroy Israel. The situation of Gaza’s residents would be far better served by these organizers calling on Hamas to meet the three minimal demands of the international community for normalization-recognition of Israel, renunciation of violence and terror, and acceptance of previous agreements. This would lead to a real improvement in the lives of ordinary Gazans.

Israel must be able to defend itself and keep weapons out of the hands of Hamas. And the U.S. must stand with Israel. (*Press Release*)

**Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV)**

*June 4, 2010*

Israel is one of our strongest and most important allies, and the United States stands firmly with Israel at this critical time.

I deeply regret the loss of life in the flotilla incident, including the death of an American citizen.

Israel has an obligation to protect its citizens and therefore has a clear right under international law to prevent weapons from getting in the hands of terrorists determined to target them. Israel indicated it was willing to put in place a process to ensure that legitimate humanitarian relief reached Gaza. Unfortunately this offer was rejected.

Israel has pledged to carry out a transparent and thorough investigation of this incident, and I look forward to its findings. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Dave Reichert (R-WA)**

*June 17, 2010*

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to voice my strong support for Israel and its right to defend herself and her people against potential terrorist threats.

As the world watched, Israel took action to prevent a flotilla from reaching the Gaza strip because Hamas terrorists could have smuggled in weapons that would be used to take the lives of innocent people.

Israel is a good friend and a true ally to America. We must not turn our back Israel at this critical time. We must stand with them. We must support them and their right to protect and defend the safety of their people and the sovereignty of their nation.

The Israeli Government just announced the decision to appoint an independent public commission to review the circumstances surrounding the flotilla raid. This commission will be headed by a retired Israeli judge and will include two Israeli experts in international law and two high-ranking foreign observers. This action demonstrates Israel's commitment to act within the law and to hold itself accountable in good faith to the international community. (*Congressional Record*)

**Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R - CA)**

*June 9, 2010*

Mr. Speaker, recently, Israeli military personnel intercepted a flotilla of ships headed towards Gaza. The world outcry has been deafening. It has also been misplaced.

The Israelis have been portrayed as committing violence in order to prevent food and humanitarian supplies from reaching women and children in the crowded Palestinian community of Gaza.

Yes, that would certainly be an outrage if that is what was going on. But the actions taken by Israel are aimed only at preventing rockets from being shot into Israel, not denying food or medicine to the Palestinians. The image in the public's mind is totally distorted. And what the world needs to do is take a closer look at what is being presented to them.

Even Al Jazeera, the most prominent Arabic TV news station, could not block out the reality of so-called activists, peace activists, who were really thugs, attacking Israeli soldiers with lead pipes and clubs. The soldiers are seen refraining from using their weapons as they watch fellow troopers being beaten into a bloody pulp and lying on the ground, their lives in danger.

Well, who first initiated violence, the violence that we are talking about, is not in question. Even Al Jazeera could not hide that fact. Yet, photos of the wounded and dead who ended up--and these were wounded and dead activists, after they had started beating to death the Israeli soldiers and, thus, force was being used in order to protect these soldiers' lives--well, only these pictures of wounded and dead so-called peace activists were highlighted in reports of this incident.

This distortion is intended to deceive the people of the world. The so-called activists created the violence that erupted when the flotilla was intercepted for inspection.

Now, apologists will simply say that those pipe-wielding thugs were justified because the Israelis should never have stopped and interdicted those ships aimed at giving humanitarian supplies to the people of Gaza. Well, why was that inspection necessary? Never stop asking that basic question. Why was it necessary for that inspection?

They weren't stopping the supplies; they were simply inspecting the cargo. Why are the Israelis insisting on inspecting the ships going to Gaza? Because Palestinian territory is being used to launch thousands of rockets and artillery at civilian communities in Israel from Gaza.

Now, the purpose of the flotilla was not to put food and humanitarian aid in the hands of the Palestinian women and children. That would have happened anyway because the Israelis, they just wanted to inspect this and then let that food and humanitarian supplies go forward.

No, that wasn't the purpose. The purpose of the flotilla was to prevent Israel from stopping the missile attacks on Israeli women and children by preventing Israel from interdicting weapons shipments into Gaza with the humanitarian aid as a cover.

No. These missile attacks from Gaza are, by anybody's definition, a terrorist attack. If the Palestinians want food and humanitarian supplies, end the rocket attacks.

Israel would be very happy if that happened, to let any food and humanitarian aid go into Gaza. And this is not an unreasonable demand on the part of the Israelis to at least inspect the cargoes in order to ensure that they are not being used to cover up the shipment of weapons that are being used to kill Israeli citizens. If you are launching explosive projectiles into Israel, Israel has a right to look at what you are shipping into your country to make sure you are not shipping in those items that are necessary to shoot these things into Israel and kill women and children.

So in reality, the so-called peace activists were not victims at all. They were belligerent, they were hostile, they were seeking more killing in the form of not only just killing these Israeli soldiers trying to inspect their ships, but killing more Israeli civilians through rocket attacks. They also, of course, are not just killing innocent people; they are undermining any chance for peace and reconciliation between the Palestinian people and the Israeli people.

No, those so-called peace activists were the villains in this situation, and those Israeli troopers who tried to at least inspect it to see that rockets were not being smuggled in, they were the heroes of the day. The world needs to seek truth in this issue and ignore the distorted picture they are being presented. (*Congressional Record*)

**Rep. Peter Roskam (R-IL)**

*June 2, 2010*

Our good friend and ally Israel lives under a constant threat from Hamas terrorists in Gaza. The anti-Israel factions of the U.N. have predictably and disappointingly reverted to their blame-Israel-first mantra when the video evidence is strikingly clear that the 'humanitarians' on the one flotilla ship did not set sail with intentions as pure as the wind driven snow. This was confrontational and provocative. The United States has no greater friend in the Middle East, and it is important that we stand with our strategic and democratic ally in the face of sanctimonious international pressure. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL)**

*June 9, 2010*

"Israel is a sovereign democracy with a robust, autonomous, and effective judiciary – it can hold itself accountable, and has frequently done so.

"The U.S. is wrong to pressure Israel into agreeing to international involvement in an investigation of its defensive naval operation against those lending support to Hamas in Gaza.

This is yet another mistake that will undermine our allies but not earn us any support from Israel's enemies.

“It was also a mistake that the U.S. did not block the UN Security Council's hasty statement on this matter.

“It is revealing that it took the Council just hours to implicitly condemn Israel for defending herself – but with Iran racing to get nuclear weapons, it took over a year to produce even a do-nothing resolution of sanctions doomed to fail.

“The position of the U.S. Government must be: Support Israel without exception at the UN; unequivocally oppose the next Goldstone Report; stand up for the right of America, Israel, and other democracies to defend themselves by refusing to participate in or legitimize the International Criminal Court.” (*Press Release*)

June 2, 2010

“The U.S. must unequivocally oppose this UN effort to produce another ‘Goldstone Report’ to demonize Israel and undermine the Jewish State's sovereign right of self-defense.

“Israel is repeatedly targeted for destruction by violent extremists and their state-sponsors. Yet, the UN, time and again, ignores these threats while aligning itself with radical outlaws – whether they be firing rockets at Sderot or attacking Israeli soldiers seeking to inspect ship cargo.

“Rather than helping to promote peace, the UN's biased actions encourage and validate the efforts of those threatening Israel's sovereignty and security.

“However, these efforts do not stop at the UN. Those pushing for more Goldstone-type inquiries are also looking to the unaccountable International Criminal Court to persecute free democratic nations for defending their citizens.

“The U.S. must stand up for our sovereignty, our citizens, and our democratic allies and refuse to participate in or legitimize the ICC.” (*Press Release*)

June 1, 2010

Israel has the right and the duty to defend itself and its citizens, including by seeking to inspect ships run by Islamist extremist groups. These extremists, suspected of financing jihadist groups, were seeking to enter Hamas-controlled Gaza despite repeated requests from the Israeli government not to do so.

Hamas, Hezbollah, and other Islamist militant groups have repeatedly used innocent civilians as human shields. They hide rockets and other weapons in homes, hospitals, and schools. With this in mind and given that the group running the ‘flotilla’ has ties to jihadist groups, Israel was compelled to search the cargo and passengers as a vital security measure.

Israeli soldiers had every right to defend their lives against a lynch mob attacking them with knives and clubs.

It is deeply troubling that the UN's knee-jerk reaction was to immediately condemn and isolate Israel, particularly while still refusing to take concrete steps to stop Iran's march toward a nuclear weapon.

The U.S. must stand with Israel against this diplomatic lynch mob and the threats posed to its security, and very existence, by Hezbollah, Hamas, Iran, and Syria. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA)**

June 4, 2010

“I strongly support Israel's right to defend herself against Hamas and other terrorist groups. Israel's blockade of Gaza is a necessary measure to prevent Hamas from stockpiling weapons, including rockets that have been used to kill innocent Israeli civilians. Their blockade does not interfere with the flow of humanitarian aid. In fact, Israel transfers over 10,000 tons of humanitarian supplies a week into Gaza, including food, clothing, and medicine.”

“The purpose of these so-called ‘freedom flotillas’ is to provoke a confrontation with Israel. Unfortunately, that purpose was achieved with the first flotilla incident. News that a second flotilla is trying to break Israel's blockade is disappointing. According to reports, Israel has already offered to direct the ship to an Israeli port, where the supplies would be unloaded, inspected and transferred to Gaza by land, but those offers were rejected. The reason for the rejection is obvious: The flotillas are designed to violate Israel's sovereignty; not to provide aid to the needy. Israel has the right to board this ship and to maintain its blockade.” (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Steve Rothman (D-NJ)**

June 2, 2010

The U.S. stands shoulder to shoulder with Israel in our fight against violent extremism.

I am sincerely regretful for the loss of life that occurred during the incident in the Mediterranean Sea involving the Mavi Marmara ship and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). As we are learning more about the incident it is clear that, while there may have been peace activists on the ship, there were individuals on board who had violent intentions. As Israel's soldiers sought to reroute the ship to Ashdod – where humanitarian materials could be gathered, screened, and delivered to the people of Gaza – there was a pre-meditated, planned effort to injure and possibly kill IDF soldiers.

Israel made every attempt to come to a peaceful resolution and avoid violence. However, after repeated warnings from the IDF, the Mavi Marmara ship refused to heed the internationally

recognized blockade of Hamas's terrorist-controlled Gaza strip. It is extremely unfortunate that Hamas refuses to pursue peace with Israel and move toward a two-state solution. Hamas is a terrorist organization that regularly suppresses the rights of Gazans – from women and homosexuals to Christians and anyone who would speak out against their tyrannical rule – and is surely no friend of any reputable peace activist.

Israel continues to allow trucks loaded with humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza on a daily basis – amounting to more than 738,000 tons of food and supplies last year. Israel has made numerous efforts to help the people of Gaza and improve their quality of life. Yet, at every step of the way, Hamas refuses to put the well-being of Gazans and the pursuit of peace over their own terrorist ideology and desire to destroy the Jewish State of Israel.

It is long past time to realize a two-state solution, achieved through direct negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and Israel. I pray that this incident does not derail the peace process.  
*(Press Release)*

### **Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA)**

*June 4, 2010*

“Martyrdom in the way of Allah is our inspiration.” That’s from the creed of the Muslim Brotherhood. If it sounds like the charter of Hamas – the terrorist group that controls the Gaza Strip and the intended beneficiary of this week’s “Freedom Flotilla” – it should.

You see, Hamas is an off-shoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, a movement born in 1920’s Egypt that seeks an Islamic caliphate – stretching from Spain to Indonesia. The Brotherhood is thought to have inspired many Islamist terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda. Only by understanding these connections can this week’s maritime clash between Israeli commandos and “peace” activists headed by Turkish Humanitarian Relief (IHH) be fully understood.

Like Hamas, the IHH has strong connections to the Brotherhood. Many flotilla participants, maybe 100, were MBers from across the Muslim world.

The IHH’s terror links are surfacing. According to French intelligence, IHH’s phone records in Istanbul showed repeated calls in 1996 to an Al-Qaeda guesthouse in Milan and Algerian terrorist operatives in Europe. French anti-terror magistrate Jean-Louis Brugiere, who two of my staff have interviewed, testified that IHH played an “important role” in the failed 1999 al Qaeda “millennium plot” to bomb LAX. And IHH’s head showed-up in Gaza with the Hamas chief just this April.

IHH, the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas. Let’s face it. Peas of a pod.

Meanwhile, Turkey continues its sprint away from the West. Its Islamist government is fresh off its deal (Brazil helped too) with Iran to avoid sanctions. It’s now holding a hero’s welcome home for the flotilla. The troubling trends there I wrote about six months ago are only worse. A

Wall Street Journal op-ed today said Turkey's political debate in recent years has been a "national decline into madness." Seriously, what does Turkey's NATO membership still really mean?

Israel's Prime Minister said yesterday, "This was not the Love Boat, it was the Hate Boat." Worried about American public opinion, so playing on the schmaltzy 1970's/80's American TV show, this was a good line, especially because it's true. He added, "The same countries that are criticizing us today should know that they will be targeted tomorrow." They already have. Our friends overseas better figure all this out real quick, especially those laying between Spain and Indonesia. ([Blog Posting](#))

### **Rep. John Sarbanes (D-MD)**

*June 4, 2010*

As more facts emerge about the flotilla incident, it appears that delivering humanitarian aid to the residents of Gaza was not the primary objective of those piloting the Mavi Marmara vessel; if so, that could have been done by cooperating with Israeli officials in a process that would achieve delivery of the vessel's cargo after inspection for weapons. Instead, we are left to conclude that the persistence of the Mavi Marmara in seeking to breach the blockade was intended to provoke a clash with Israeli Defense Forces. That in fact occurred and things went terribly awry, resulting in the tragic loss of nine lives.

Some have expressed the view that Israel alone should account for this incident. That perspective neglects the role that Turkey played in staging the flotilla and Turkey's readiness to condone this kind of brinkmanship. Further inquiry will reveal to what extent activists on the Mavi Marmara were connected to extremist organizations that are implementing a broad strategy of confrontation with Israel.

One cannot overstate the tensions that surround Gaza: the humanitarian crisis, the continued stranglehold of Hamas over Gaza's residents, and Israel's legitimate fear that weapons will be smuggled into the area, by land or by sea, to attack Israeli citizens. Diffusing these tensions so that non-military goods may move more freely into and out of Gaza must be a top priority for all parties seeking peace and security for the region. (*Press Release*)

### **Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA)**

*June 9, 2010*

Last week's interdiction by the Israeli Navy of a small flotilla of ships trying to run the blockade on Hamas-controlled Gaza ignited a firestorm around the world.

Foreign commentators, who look askance at the Jewish state in the best of times, condemned the raid in the strongest of terms, attempting to cast it as another example of Israel's supposed slide toward South African-style apartheid or even fascism.

Here and in Israel, itself, the reaction reflected a deeper understanding of the broad spectrum of threats confronting Israel. The execution of the raid, itself, was criticized in some quarters, but there remains a fundamental understanding of the underlying conditions that gave rise to Israel's blockade of Gaza and a realization that those conditions persist and that, as long as Gaza remains under the control of Hamas, there can be no lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Hamas leaders and their masters in Tehran and Damascus have repeatedly refused to renounce terror, to abide by agreements signed by the Palestinian Authority and Israel and to recognize Israel's right to exist. They have used Gaza's impoverished population as human shields in their war of attrition with Israel and have subordinated their people's needs to the quest for rockets and other weapons. Two days ago, Israeli forces intercepted an armed squad of five terrorists who were wearing diving suits and who were apparently on their way to attack Israeli targets.

Madam Speaker, there can be no doubt that these are dangerous times for Israel and that America must stand by the Middle East's only democracy in its quest for peace and security.

Despite four rounds of U.N. sanctions, including today's passage of tighter finance curbs and an expanded arms embargo, Iran has not been deterred in its quest to develop nuclear weapons. While this latest round of sanctions is a welcomed step, there is deep skepticism that President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the hard-line clerics who rule Iran can be dissuaded from their present course. An Iran armed with the bomb would be a catastrophe, destabilizing the Middle East and triggering an arms race in the region.

President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton have done a great service to Israel, to the greater Middle East, and to the cause of international peace and security through their efforts to forge a consensus in the Security Council, and I offer them my personal thanks. Yet, even as we applaud today's sanctions vote, we must redouble our efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, and I look forward to further diplomatic and unilateral initiatives to convince Tehran that the costs of continuing on this reckless path are greater than any perceived benefit.

Hezbollah, the Shiite militia cum political party created in Lebanon by Iran's Revolutionary Guards in 1983, has rearmed in the aftermath of the 2006 war with Israel. Its arsenal of short-range missiles has reportedly been augmented by longer range Scuds, which can reach targets throughout Israel. The Scuds, believed to be supplied by Syria, augment Hezbollah's existing stockpile of up to 40,000 rockets stored in underground bunkers in southern Lebanon.

Turkey, which had been Israel's strongest Muslim majority ally and an important mediator between Jerusalem and Arab capitals, has, in recent months, become deeply hostile to Israel. In addition to hosting the organizers of the Gaza flotilla, Turkey has said it would reduce military and trade ties, and it has put off discussions of energy projects, including natural gas and freshwater shipments. Last year, Prime Minister Erdogan accused Israel of being a greater

violator of human rights than Sudan, and today, Turkey was one of only two votes against new rounds of sanctions against Iran in the Security Council.

Most worrisome in the long term is the broad-based international campaign to delegitimize Israel. University campuses have been divided by divestment campaigns. There have been academic and economic boycotts of Israel in Europe, and many Israelis are wary of traveling to several European countries.

The great majority of the world's people alive today were not born until well after World War II and did not bear witness to the Holocaust. They did not watch as thousands of Jewish refugees, desperate to start new lives in Palestine after the war, were forcibly prevented from entering the country by Britain. They did not witness the miracle of Israel's birth in 1948 and the immediate invasion of the new state by five Arab armies.

For more than six decades, this country has stood by Israel. We have admired its pluck, its ingenuity, and its dedication to democratic principles in spite of all of the threats it faces. While there has always been a strategic dimension to the U.S.-Israel alliance, the relationship has really been rooted in our shared values.

Madam Speaker, 17 years ago, on the occasion of the signing of the Oslo Accords, late Prime Minister Rabin spoke movingly of his journey.

He said, "We have come from Jerusalem, the ancient and eternal capital of the Jewish people. We have come from an anguished and grieving land. We have come from a people, a home, a family, that has not known a single year--not a single month--in which mothers have not wept for their sons. We have come to try and put an end to the hostilities so that our children and our children's children will no longer have to experience the painful cost of war, violence, and terror.

"We have come to secure their lives and to ease the sorrow and the painful memories of the past--to hope and pray for peace."

We share the prime minister's sorrow, and to the people of Israel, we say, America is with you. (*Congressional Record*)

June 8, 2010

"Israel has the right and the duty to defend its citizens from attack, and it is both reasonable and prudent to interdict weapons from being smuggled into Gaza.

"Last Monday's confrontation between Israeli naval forces and a group of activists seeking to bring supplies to the Hamas-governed Gaza Strip was tragic, and I join the worldwide outpouring of grief over the deaths of nine people aboard the Mavi Marmara.

"In the midst of this tragedy, we must not forget that Israel has been engaged in a protracted struggle with Hamas, a terrorist organization that has repeatedly stated that it will never accept

Israel's right to exist, and which has used the 1.4 million people of Gaza as human shields for rocket attacks and other acts of terror against Israeli citizens.

“The Turkish group that organized the flotilla, the IHH, must accept responsibility for the loss of life aboard the ship by deliberately provoking a confrontation with Israeli Navy personnel enforcing a legal blockade of Gaza. Rather than accepting Israel's offer to offload its cargo in Israel for subsequent transport via the land crossings into Gaza, the Mavi Marmara chose to try to run the blockade and then resisted the Israeli boarding party, beating Israeli troops with metal pipes and other weapons. In the days since the incident, it has been revealed some of those aboard the ship were jihadist provocateurs seeking a clash with the Israeli military. And regrettably in this, they were successful.

“The international community must show greater resolve in forcing Hamas to renounce terror, accept Israel's right to exist, and abide by prior agreements. We must work together with Israel to meet the urgent needs of the people of Gaza, but Hamas bears ultimate responsibility for the continued suffering of the people of that region.” *(Press Release)*

### **Rep. Aaron Schock (R-IL)**

June 6, 2010

There are some vital points being overlooked in the international coverage of the Israeli response to the Gaza flotilla, and a mountain of hypocrisy that needs to be exposed. Egypt, the Palestinian Authority (PA) and every Arab foreign minister agreed that Hamas not be allowed to control the southern border crossing with Egypt after the terror group violently seized control of Gaza in 2007.

Yes, Egypt has blockaded Gaza under Hamas's control as much as the Israelis have – and with the widespread support of Arab governments and the PA. Where's the outrage?

Palestinians are supposedly experiencing a humanitarian crisis, and yet no Arab or Islamic government has demanded Egypt open its border with Gaza. Hello, Turkey?

When Israel pulled out completely from the Gaza Strip in 2005, it imposed no blockade. It was only after Hamas began a terror campaign with 10,000 rockets fired at Israeli civilians that Israel and Egypt imposed this blockade – with PA and Arab support. No Arab government wanted a terror-prone Hamas to flourish in Gaza, let alone spread.

ONE NEEDS to ask: If the Kurds or the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) across the Turkish border in Iraq rained 10,000 rockets on Turkish civilians, what would the Turks do? After all, the Kurds have legitimate disputes with the government of Turkey, and have been viciously repressed.

What if international NGOs decided to airlift humanitarian supplies to PKK refugees in Iraq, with those shipments containing civilian equipment that could easily be made into weapons?

Only Turkey recognizes a Turkish republic in Northern Cyprus. What would the Turkish military's response be if organizations from nations that do not recognize the Turkish occupation of Northern Cyprus decided to break that military occupation?

Again, regarding Turkish hypocrisy, the prime minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, received the international pariah who leads Sudan – President Omar Bashir – a man who has committed genocide. The International Criminal Court has an arrest warrant out for him on charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Not only has the Darfur region of Sudan experienced genocide directed by Bashir and his government, but other regions of southern Sudan have as well. During the visit in mid-August of last year, Erdogan said he did not believe Bashir was guilty of the war crimes for which he was indicted.

And here is how the Turkish prime minister justified that widely disputed contention: “It is not possible for those who belong to the Muslim faith to carry out genocide,” said Erdogan. He deems Bashir innocent. End of story.

THE TURKISH foreign minister recently called the flotilla episode, “Turkey’s 9-11.” Shame on you sir. No American should ever forget such an insult.

This brings me to the reason for the blockade of Gaza, including the Israeli naval blockade. Some of the items on the ships were dual-use, with both civilian and military uses. For instance, there was rebar for a small amount of cement.

Heaven knows Gaza needs a lot of rebuilding. This tiny amount is insignificant for construction, however, although it's a nice supply of iron to be converted into weapons.

If the Israeli naval blockade ends does anyone really think Hamas won't be importing a wide array of weapons? If the ships don't have to go through checkpoints, arms shipments would resume without a doubt – and so would the rocket attacks.

What nation would sit back and allow arms to pour into a neighboring territory that will certainly be used in more attacks on its people? If the blockade ends, arms shipments into Gaza will resume, and rocket firings into will Israel resume. It's that simple.

None of the United Nations peacekeeping organizations and observers has kept out the sophisticated weapons imported by Hizbullah into southern Lebanon – despite absolute UN assurances to do so. No similar observers are capable of standing in the way of Iranian arms shipments to Hamas either. Only Israeli and Egyptian checkpoints can do that.

Again, I ask, would Turkey allow similar organizations to ship uninspected cargo to the suffering PKK Kurds in Turkey and Iraq? Hamas needs to negotiate with its estranged brothers in the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, and commit themselves to peace and recognition of Israel. Then peace and prosperity will prevail.

Let's get the facts straight and the hypocrisy exposed as this debate proceeds. ([Jerusalem Post](#))

## **Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY)**

*June 6, 2010*

Today, U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer, in a personal letter to Secretary Clinton, called for the State Department to immediately conduct an investigation to determine if the Turkish based non-governmental organization (NGO), Insani Yardim Vakfi (IHH), otherwise known as the Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief, is currently - or has in the past - provided financial, logistical or material support to any terrorist organizations listed on the State Department's list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO). According to a 2006 report, the group served as a front for funding terrorist organizations and sending rebels to fight in places such as Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya. Recently, France's former top anti-terrorism judge Jean-Louis Bruguiere stated that IHH was connected to the "millennium plot" to bomb the Los Angeles airport in late 1999. And it has been stated in recent media reports that major international Islamic charities such as IHH, while providing genuine humanitarian relief, are "charitable front groups that provide support to Al-Qaida."

"The United States must do everything in its power to combat support for terrorist organizations here and across the world," Schumer said. "We must target, investigate, and, if need be, punish those who offer logistical, financial and political support for terrorist groups. That is why today I am urging Secretary Clinton to take the necessary steps to immediately conduct an investigation to determine if IHH has ties to terror groups. If it is determined that this organization is providing support to terrorist organizations, then appropriate measures should be taken and that organization should be held accountable for its actions."

Evidence pointing to links between IHH and terrorist organizations has begun to pile up. Based on statements from U.S. State Department officials, IHH representatives have met with senior Hamas officials in Turkey, Syria, and Gaza over the past three years. International media reports have also referenced IHH's "clear, long-standing ties to terrorism and Jihad". Additionally, according to reports, Turkish security authorities began investigating IHH in December 1997, after having received intelligence that senior IHH figures had purchased automatic weapons from radical Islamic organizations. As a result, IHH facilities were raided and organization members were arrested. During the security raid the Turkish security forces found weapons, explosives, instructions for making IEDs and a flag with a jihad message. IHH, has also been recognized as a member of the "Union of Good" a Saudi-based umbrella organization known to finance global terrorism. On Nov. 12, 2008, the U.S. government announced the umbrella group's leaders as Specially Designated Global Terrorists. Schumer says that it is especially disturbing that an organization such as IHH, whose connections to terrorism lie under a cloud of uncertainty, has been afforded Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

Schumer says it is crucial that government officials use every resource available to determine which organizations are dedicated to providing humanitarian aid and which groups are providing support to terrorist organizations. The distinction should be clear and unambiguous and if there is any reason to believe that an NGO is providing support to terrorist organizations, then

appropriate measures should be taken and that organization should be held accountable for its actions.

A copy of the letter can be found below.

Dear Secretary Clinton:

I write to ask that the State Department investigate whether the Turkish-based non-governmental organization (NGO) İnsani Yardım Vakfı (I.H.H), otherwise known as the Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief, is providing financial, logistical or material support to any terrorist organizations listed on the State Department's list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO).

There is reason for concern that this so-called charitable organization may have links to terror groups. A 2006 report by the Danish Institute for International Studies described the group as a front for funding terrorist organizations and sending Mujahidin to fight in places such as Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya. Recently, France's former top anti-terrorism judge Jean-Louis Bruguiere, stated that IHH was connected to the "millennium plot" to bomb the Los Angeles airport in late 1999. And it has been stated in recent media reports, that major international Islamic charities such as IHH, while providing genuine humanitarian relief, are "charitable front groups that provide support to Al-Qaida".

Based on statements from U.S. State Department officials, we know that IHH representatives have met with senior Hamas officials in Turkey, Syria, and Gaza over the past three years and international media reports have also referenced IHH's "clear, long-standing ties to terrorism and Jihad". It is especially disturbing that an organization such as IHH, with possible connections to terrorism, has been afforded Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

I believe it is crucial that the State Department attempt to determine which organizations are dedicated to providing humanitarian aid and which groups are providing support to terrorist organizations. The distinction should be clear and unambiguous and if there is any reason to believe that an NGO is providing support to terrorist organizations, then appropriate measures should be taken.

The U.S. government must do everything in its power to combat support for terrorist organizations. I urge you to take the necessary steps to determine if the IHH currently - or in the past - provided financial, logistical or material support to any terrorist organization listed on the State Department's list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO).

Thank you for your consideration of this important request. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,

Senator Charles E. Schumer (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Allyson Schwartz (D-PA)**

*June 9, 2010*

“I rise to speak about the Gaza Flotilla incident last week and in support of one of our nation’s closest allies, Israel. While the full details of the incident aboard the Mavi Marmara are still under investigation, it is apparent that the organizers of the flotilla intentionally sought to confront Israeli Security Forces and defy the embargo established by Israel and Egypt. The organizers rejected means to deliver humanitarian aid used by internationally accepted organizations, including the Red Cross.

“The resulting altercation and tragic loss of life could have been avoided had the organizers of the flotilla agreed to Israel’s repeated offers to dock at one of their ports and allow for the overland transfer of humanitarian aid to Gaza under the supervision of those in the flotilla.

“Israel has the right to protect and defend itself. The blockade of Gaza exists to prevent arms smuggling into Gaza and to protect the citizens of Israel, who have been subject to thousands of rocket attacks launched by Hamas since 2005. Hamas, recognized as an enemy of Israel and as a terrorist organization, has as its mission the destruction and dissolution of the State of Israel, continues to be a threat to the safety and security of the residents Israel.

“The loss of life is tragic. Unfortunately the organizers of the Flotilla were clearly intent on provoking a military response, rather than delivering humanitarian aid. Otherwise they would have worked with Israel to safely and securely transfer supplies into Gaza. In spite of the fact that Hamas is singularly focused on the destruction of Israel, Israel currently allows delivery of 10,000-15,000 tons of humanitarian aid a week to Gaza.

“Certainly, the United States will continue to support Israel and work closely with all our allies to suppress violent extremism around the world. We will continue to work to end hostilities in the Middle East and find a way to ensure security for the State of Israel and a future of hope for the Palestinian people.” (*Congressional Record*)

**Rep. Pete Sessions (R-TX)**

*June 4, 2010*

Earlier this week, Israel was forced to take an unfortunate but necessary defensive action to protect its citizens. Threatened with an incursion by so-called ‘humanitarian’ groups sympathetic to a regime recognized by the U.S. Department of State as a foreign terrorist organization, Israel prevented a flotilla of activists from breaking a blockade into Gaza. While I regret the loss of life associated with the ongoing turmoil, Israel simply cannot be expected to stand idly by while its security is challenged and internationally-recognized channels for aid delivery are ignored.

Israel's need to protect its citizens from existential threats – especially from terrorist organizations committed to its destruction – is paramount. Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran have time and again ignored Israeli peace overtures and continue to call for Israel's destruction.

The United Nations' immediate condemnation of Israel reveals the depth and intensity of an international double-standard that seeks to blame Israel first while ignoring Hamas' and Hezbollah's civilian targeting, as well as Iran's obvious attempts to acquire nuclear weapons.

Unfortunately, this will likely not be the last time that terrorist organizations – under the guise of humanitarian aid – seek to provoke Israel. As much of the world turns the other way, my support for Israel remains steadfast in its struggle for security until a lasting peace is achieved in the Middle East. *(Press Release)*

**Rep. Joe Sestak (D-PA)**

June 4, 2010

The loss of civilian life in any case is tragic and I express my sincere condolences to the families of those killed and injured on both sides of this event.

Israel has a legitimate right to defend itself. In this case, it appears that the ship carrying humanitarian and construction supplies attempted to break a naval blockade of Gaza despite clear warnings that they would be denied entry. While the Palestinians have a right to humanitarian assistance, we must not forget that there remain radicals, fueled by organizations like Hamas, who wish Israel's destruction and have no intention of recognizing its right to exist. Israel must maintain its right to protect itself from them and thwart their attacks, including by preventing dangerous materials from getting into the wrong hands.

In the short-term, I support the recommendation of the United States for the Israeli government to quickly appoint an independent commission to review the circumstances that surrounded the event so that the latest round of peace talks toward a sustainable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can proceed without interruption, and not let this unfortunate incident delay such talks.

Above all, this incident highlights the fact that the status quo is unacceptable and that the United States must take a lead role in encouraging further dialogue. Active efforts can better ensure that this does not become an obstacle to further negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, with the United States. Instead, talks must be able to persist with active demonstrations of a willingness to move toward a sustainable two-state solution that protects Israel's security for the long term.

In working with Israel to learn from this incident, we cannot lose our focus on protecting Israel's security. *(Press Release)*

**Rep. Bill Shuster (R-PA)**

June 7, 2010

“Like any other nation, Israel has an absolute right to protect itself from attack. Hamas has received weapons hidden in humanitarian aid shipments to the Gaza Strip in the past and there is no question that Israel’s blockade of Gaza has decreased the threat of attack by Hamas on innocent Israeli civilians.

The actions of the flotilla activists over the past few weeks prove that they are not concerned with the peace process or with working with Israel to secure its border along the Gaza Strip. Instead, their violence upon breaking the blockade demonstrated that they are more interested in attacking Israel than helping the Palestinians. The international community should recognize this instead of jumping to conclusions and investigations on Israel’s motives for enforcing the blockage.

Further, the international community should be alarmed at recent remarks by the Iranian regime promising to add Iranian Revolutionary Guard support to future flotilla efforts. This cannot stand. Our ally Israel is under siege and the United States must reaffirm its support for the people of Israel and their right to self-defense.” *(Press Release)*

**Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ)**

June 16, 2010

Madam Speaker, I rise today to call on the President to give Israel the unequivocal, robust, and vigorous support it deserves.

Since the May 31 Gaza flotilla incident, Israel has been under media attack, and even in the past few days many articles and international newspapers take a grossly anti-Israel slant. Make no mistake about it, the purpose of the flotilla was to provoke an incident, thereby to set up an international media campaign against Israel . The flotilla was an aggressive and hypocritical attempt to manipulate world public opinion and to isolate Israel . Thankfully, it has not worked in the United States, where Rasmussen polling shows that despite the anti-Israel bias of so much media coverage, less than 20 percent of Americans think that the Israeli Government is to blame for the deaths that resulted from the incident.

Madam Speaker, the facts of the incident were clear within 48 hours, and it's high time our government sent a much more powerful and unambiguous message, that the United States fully supports Israel's action to intercept the flotilla. The administration should emphasize that Israel's action was legal, that it was right, and that the U.S. stands with Israel without any ifs, ands, or buts, or so long as, or any other qualifiers.

It's a matter of record that on May 25 the Israeli Government offered to offload at its port of Ashdod the humanitarian aid the flotilla carried and to have the U.N. personnel deliver it to

Gaza. On that same day, the Israeli Government also stated it would not permit the flotilla to break its blockade of Gaza, which is not only legal under international law; but I believe it's also just, given the rampant maritime arms smuggling, the 7,000 rocket attacks Hamas has launched on Israel from Gaza since 2005, and the unlimited aid that can flow to Gaza through proper checkpoints.

Madam Speaker, the Turkish group that organized the flotilla has documented ties to Hamas, which is recognized by the U.S. Department of State as a foreign terrorist organization. Radicals with ties to other terrorist groups were aboard the ships. The flotilla launch was marked by violent, anti-Semitic rallies. Flotilla participants spoke to al Jazeera of martyrdom and sang intifada songs. All this shows the grotesque hypocrisy of those who would portray the flotilla participants as somehow being harmless peace activists. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Madam Speaker, the response of the Israeli Government was extraordinarily restrained and responsible. Israeli troops boarded the ships in the flotilla carrying paint ball guns, but when the crew beat them with iron rods, stabbed and lynched them and threw one of them off the deck, they got the order to defend themselves with their side arms. This, too, was right. Every government permits its troops to defend themselves when they are attacked.

I call on President Obama to give Israel our government's full support and to make unmistakably clear our government's position that Israel, in its response to the Gaza flotilla, was fully in the right. Whether or not the Israeli Government decides to adjust the blockade, our government must make it perfectly clear to all that we will never permit an anti-Israel media campaign to isolate America's most faithful and trusted friend in the Middle East. (*Congressional Record*)

**Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA)**

*June 9, 2010*

The loss of life and injuries sustained on the Mavi Marmara are tragic. It is important that we ascertain the facts surrounding the incident. Providing humanitarian aid in a non-violent manner to the Gaza Strip is a noble cause and should be permitted—in fact encouraged. Having said that, Israel has the right to enforce its blockade under international law and to inspect cargo destined for Gaza. (*Office of Rep. Jackie Speier*)

**Rep. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)**

*June 10, 2010*

The UN Security Council voted in favor of imposing a strong, broad-based new set of sanctions on Iran for its continued failure to end its nuclear program that threatens not only the stability of the region, but also the security of Israel. Our staunchest ally and friend, Israel, recently faced judgment by some in the international community before all the facts were known surrounding the tragic attempt to break the Gaza blockade. While we work on a two-state solution and

ultimate peace in the region, we must not forget that Israel has the right to defend herself against threats. Our common threat is Iran and time is running out - we must work harder to prevent a nuclear Iran. That is why I strongly urge Congress for a speedy final passage of our own Iran sanctions legislation, which I cosponsored. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. John Sullivan (R-OK)**

June 10, 2010

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of one of the U.S.'s strongest and most steadfast allies, Israel. Since the tragic events of May 31, 2010, many have publicly questioned the right of Israel to defend herself by blockading terrorist-controlled Gaza. I believe that this blockade is a necessary measure to stop the shipment of weapons and prevent the loss of innocent lives in the region. After careful examination of the facts, I am confident Israel's right to defend herself will be sustained in the eyes of the international community.

Israel plays an intricate role in United States foreign policy and provides the United States with a staunch ally in the region. As the only free market economy and viable democracy in the Middle East, it is essential that Israel and the United States continue this mutually beneficial partnership. We should continue to support this valuable ally in their fight against terrorism and extremism.

I encourage the international community to recognize this basic right of Israel and encourage my colleagues to join me in making clear that the United States cares deeply about our friend and ally and we will not allow their right to their own defense compromised because of the actions of Hamas extremists who seek to do them harm. (*Congressional Record*)

**Rep. Todd Tiahrt (R-KS)**

June 2, 2010

Israel has every right to defend itself from terrorist threats," said Tiahrt. "While loss of life is always regrettable, much of the world has rushed to judgment without full knowledge of the facts or situation. Given the constant terrorist attacks waged by Hamas in Gaza against innocent Israeli civilians, Israel is absolutely right to have a blockade formed to ensure weapons do not find their way into Gaza and into the hands of terrorists. Humanitarian aid is delivered to Gaza routinely through a legal process. However, it is clear this flotilla was trying to send a political message rather than deliver humanitarian supplies.

I am deeply disappointed in the handling of this crisis by the Obama administration. By seemingly ignoring the facts, the administration appears more interested in appeasing liberal special interest groups than standing with one of our closest and most important allies. President Obama has said in the past that the White House has an 'unshakable commitment' to Israel's security— it's time the President live up to that promise. The Obama administration should

support a fair inquiry of the Gaza incident—but be cautious about information coming from those who seek harm to Israel.

It is our moral and strategic obligation to stand strong with the Israeli people and support this beacon of democracy in the Middle East— and against anyone who seeks destruction. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Patrick J. Tiberi (R-OH)**

*June 3, 2010*

I fully support Israel’s right to defend itself and use the means necessary to ensure their nation’s security. The deliberate attempt to break the blockade around Gaza is a reminder that Israelis live with the daily threats of rockets and terror attacks. While the loss of life and injuries suffered are tragic, Israel acted to keep its citizens safe. Israel and the United States share a strong and enduring relationship. Israel should be able to count on the United States as it faces continued threats. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD)**

*June 3, 2010*

I deeply regret the loss of life off the coast of Gaza and offer my condolences to those who lost loved ones and my wishes for a speedy recovery to the injured. A fair and transparent investigation of this incident should begin immediately, and I look forward to the completion of this review in a timely manner. Ultimately, this incident reinforces the critical importance for meaningful negotiations to take place to ensure a permanent and secure peace for all of the people of this region. To secure that peace, the U.S. has made clear its unshakeable commitment to the security of the State of Israel. The U.S. must also continue to make sure humanitarian assistance is able to reach the people of Gaza. While ultimately the parties to this dispute must resolve their differences, the U.S. should play a constructive role in bringing the parties together. This tragic event reinforces the need for this to happen as soon as possible. (*Press Release*)

**Sen. David Vitter (R-LA)**

*June 2, 2010*

Israel had every right to defend itself against this attack, and I believe it is crucial for the U.S. to stand with its strongest ally during this time and not join the U.N.’s condemnation of this raid.

Despite repeated warnings from the Israeli government to avoid entering the Gaza strip, these ships, operated by alleged Islamist extremists, still entered the waters and prompted Israeli

soldiers to search the cargo as a security measure. Israeli forces were then met with violent confrontation leading to the loss of life and severe injuries. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL)**

June 9, 2010

I thank the gentleman for yielding. And it was an absolute pleasure to join you on the CODEL to the Middle East in January where we learned quite a bit about the progress of the peace process.

And it has been noted by a number of our colleagues this evening that we cannot allow, in spite of all the recent controversy--which is unclear to me why a country that is defending its borders, its territory, and its people is controversial--but that we cannot allow it to take our focus off to that of a nuclear-armed Iran.

One of the things that is unbelievable to me has been the criticism and the questions that have been thrown at Israel: first, that they supposedly boarded the flotilla ships in international waters as if they somehow didn't have the right to do that. That this is a legal blockade, there isn't any disputing that. They are well within their rights and, understandably, are defending their borders and their people.

Because what country would not make sure that items coming in from a ship to an area that is run by a hostile terrorist organization would not be checked to make sure that they are the genuine humanitarian aid that the people bringing the goods in say that it is? That is simply common sense. And I would think that the citizens of any nation would expect nothing less than their government.

But the other criticism that I have heard during the week is that somehow the people of Gaza--and no one denies that there is suffering that has gone on in Gaza. The people of Gaza went through a war. They continue to be ruled by a terrorist organization, and so, as a result, they are definitely suffering.

But it is important to note that, over the last 18 months, Israel has allowed a steady flow of humanitarian aid and food to go to the people of Gaza. One million tons of humanitarian aid, to be specific, have been allowed into Gaza over the last 18 months, the equivalent of one ton of aid per man, woman, and child in food and materials living in Gaza today.

And just a few days later, an Irish ship, the Rachel Corrie, was offered the same thing, to take their goods. And they were also challenging the blockade, yet had a very different response and accepted the boarding and accepted travel to the port of Ashdod and had their goods offloaded.

The point is that Israel cannot be expected to stand idly by and allow for goods to be flowing unchecked without making sure that there aren't hostile intentions behind those goods.

And as Israel continues to face unjust criticism on the world stage, the United States must continue and will continue to support our friend, ally, and partner. And I am so proud to stand with my colleagues today.

You have a tragic situation that occurred, but we cannot forget that this blockade exists because Hamas, the ruling party of Gaza, is a terrorist organization with the sworn goal to destroy the Jewish state. A blockade supported by both Israel and Egypt is a means to stop the smuggling of illegal materials and weapons to Hamas.

And I am so pleased that you have organized this special order hour this evening and look forward to continuing to stand with you. (*Congressional Record*)

June 2, 2010

The loss of life that occurred off Israel's coast early Monday morning was tragic and regrettable. At this difficult time, it is vital that the international community not inflame the situation with condemnations and unjust criticism of Israel.

We must stand strong with Israel amidst the tragedy.

We must remember several elements of this conflict that place this tragedy in context. All but one of the flotilla's ships were able to safely and peacefully transfer humanitarian goods to Gaza, via the Israeli port city of Ashdod. In this case, the aim of the passengers aboard the Mavi Marmara was not merely humanitarian aid, but to incite political confrontation and challenge Israel's legitimate maritime blockade. The delivery of aid to Gaza by this flotilla convoy was a pretense to rouse political provocation against Israel.

We must not forget that this blockade exists because Hamas, the ruling party of Gaza, is a terrorist organization with the sworn goal to destroy the Jewish State. Such a blockade by Israel and Egypt is a means to stop the smuggling of illegal materials and weapons to Hamas. Conversely, the Israeli Navy worked to plan a non-violent interception of the flotilla and only used force when soldiers' lives were at risk.

Tragically, members of the Israeli military were beaten and stabbed while trying to peacefully escort this ship to shore, where all donated goods could have been transferred to the people of Gaza.

As Israel continues to face unjust criticism on the world stage, the United States must continue to support our friend, ally, and partner. In the meantime, this incident should in no way take our focus off the impending threat of a nuclear Iran, which is the greatest threat to global security and peace in the Middle East. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Henry A. Waxman**

*June 3, 2010*

What happened off the coast of Gaza is a tragedy because of the loss of life. While all of the facts are not yet known, it is clear that those aboard the Mavi Marmara never intended to carry out a peaceful humanitarian mission. No country, especially Israel, should permit a blockade to be pierced without a chance to see if weapons were included with other goods. Israel offered to allow humanitarian assistance to go to the people of Gaza, but for its own protection, had a right to search the cargo beforehand. It was only when faced with violence that the soldiers reacted in self-defense.

In the five years since Israel withdrew from Gaza, Hamas has sought time and again to provoke Israel with unrelenting rocket attacks, the kidnapping of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, and the smuggling of weapons and bomb making materials by any means. It is no coincidence that these events have been orchestrated, often with the help of Tehran, at moments of increased international pressure on the Iranian regime to abandon its illegal nuclear activities. While Israel must do its best to resist such provocations, the automatic international rush to condemn Israel for defending citizens and soldiers under attack is a travesty.

All who empathize with the people of Gaza and seek to end the blockade on its shores should urge Hamas to abandon terrorism and embrace a stable and more prosperous future in which two states can live side by side in peace and security. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-NY)**

*June 9, 2010*

Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, in the overnight hours of May 31, about 10 days ago, news broke that we now have become very familiar with--the previous speaker referred to it, and several of my colleagues have come to the floor this evening to talk about it--where a flotilla coming from Turkey was intercepted as part of the effort of the State of Israel to defend a blockade that was set up.

I want to spend the next hour talking a little bit about that boat and how it progressed, where it came from and why, and perhaps importantly drill into a little bit the idea of what the blockade is all about and what the history was. It is impossible to fully understand this issue only looking at it from the point of Israeli naval officers climbing on board a ship and saying, okay, I think I understand the story because I see that picture. That would no more be the truth than to watch the closing scene of Casablanca and say, okay, I understand what happened in this movie.

This was indeed a tragic thing. Anytime there is loss of life, anytime you have military officers, commandos climbing on a boat, something has broken down, something has failed. But what I don't think is fully understood, and still to this day isn't understood at capitals around the world, is who initiated this thing and why it was initiated.

Make no mistake about it, my colleagues, as Leader Hoyer will be mentioning when he arrives here shortly, the condemnation that rang around the world against Israel is almost a default position in European and Arab capitals of the world. There is almost no surprise. It is also true that those very same quarters are the ones that criticize the United States at just about any opportunity. And in many of those same places you also see far too much joyous chest beating anytime something like this goes down where the United States or Israel is involved.

It was undoubtedly unfortunate that it occurred, but it didn't happen by accident. If you look at the history of this incident, it actually started not on May 31, when the sailors climbed aboard that boat, but it started on May 17, a couple of weeks earlier. What happened then? What happened then was the Israeli Government got wind of the idea that this flotilla was leaving from Cyprus, Turkey, and said, look, understand that there is a blockade around Gaza that controls what can get inside of Gaza for obvious reasons that I will go into further later. But, frankly, to stop weapons from going into Gaza, because it is weapons and missiles that have come into the Gaza Strip, which is controlled by the terrorist organization Hamas, that have been used to terrorize Israelis. Terrorize to the magnitude of about 10,000 rockets have left from Gaza since Israel left it in 2007 and Gaza was controlled by Hamas.

So they say we have an internationally recognized blockade that's been supported by both the Bush and Obama administrations to prevent ships from coming in without their having their goods inspected. So what the Israeli Government did is they reached out internationally to the sponsors of this boat and to the people on the boat and said, look, you are welcome to bring your supplies here to Gaza.

So it was on May 31 that this boat was intercepted off the coast of Gaza, but it was May 17 that Israel said, look, if you are interested in bringing humanitarian aid to Gaza, you are welcome to do it. All you have to do is bring it into Ashdod, which is right here, and we will look at the goods, make sure there is nothing dangerous in there, and then we will allow it to be escorted into Gaza via truck.

That's not an unusual occurrence. In fact, as of this morning 11,972 trucks during this period of time the blockade has been in effect have been escorted in just such a way. It's not unusual for humanitarian aid to come into Gaza. Despite much of the rhetoric we have heard from the international community, Israel facilitates it through a process.

Now, the people on those boats, this humanitarian boat that theoretically was trying to bring humanitarian aid to Gaza, said, no, we are going to take this flotilla of boats and we are going to go into the teeth of this blockade. They were reportedly warned repeatedly, and no one has disputed that.

They were warned, look, a blockade is essentially a military thing. It is the same type of thing that we used in our blockade of Cuba. It is a recognized blockade. Because if you think about it, there aren't a lot of ways--if you look at the map here, this little stretch of land is what we are talking about. It borders Israel on some sides. Egypt, which is a participant in the blockade, they

support and help support the blockade that Israel has. This huge coast here has been used in the past, particularly by the nation of Iran, to import weapons in.

But instead, this humanitarian ship, which was no humanitarian ship as we later learned, this humanitarian ship, said, no, we are going to keep going. Now, I ask you, ladies and gentlemen, none of us are naval officers in this Chamber. Actually, Congressman Sestak is a naval officer, and I don't see him here today. But when it comes to enforcing a blockade, you don't have a lot of tools in your quiver.

Now, there are some ways that you can debilitate a boat, that you can stop its rotors from turning by essentially jamming it up from waters underneath. That was done with one, two, three, four, five of the other boats that you didn't hear about in the newspaper. But those boats were stopped using the efforts of the military in Israel to stop them in the most peaceful way possible.

Now, if a boat is coming into a blockade and it might pose a threat to Israel or to the United States, I mean, you can very easily change the names of the country and say a boat was coming from Yemen to the United States, and it's coming in and it wants to cruise down into the East River. Of course the United States would not let that happen, and the Coast Guard would say you are going to stop right here so we can inspect what's on this boat. And if they kept going, certainly we would not say, oh, that's okay. Every step necessary would be taken to stop them.

Well, that's kind of what happened here. What effectively happened was this boat said we are not going to stop, and they said we are going to leave the Israelis with no opportunity except to board the boat. That's what created the conflict. Israel did not create the conflict. They were essentially in a defensive posture, saying this is the line, don't cross it; and we are going to give you every opportunity before you reach the line to avert this conflict. The people on the boat chose not to. They wanted this conflict. They wanted this conflict. They did not want to deliver humanitarian aid; they wanted this conflict.

Well, once the conflict was upon the Israelis, I think by just about any definition of restraint the Israelis used restraint. They climbed aboard with quite literally paint guns on their shoulders to use when they landed. The only arms that they had were sidearms for the personal protection of these guys. And when they lowered themselves down on the boat, they were set upon by these humanitarian peace activists, I say with my tongue firmly in cheek. They were set upon with knives. They were set upon with steel poles. They were set upon with bullets. There were magazines and casings on the boat that did not match any of the Israeli sidearms. It was tragic that that happened. It was sad that it happened. But it was almost entirely the decision of the people on that boat.

Now, I say almost entirely, because that boat did not just appear out of the ether. It didn't just appear out of thin air. It had an enormous amount of support by some of the worst enemies of peace in that region, and some of the worst enemies, quite literally, not only of Israel, but of the United States as well. And I mean Turkey, Iran, Hamas. These are not entities that were looking for some peaceful resolution here.

Remember, once again to reiterate, here in the Gaza Strip, when elections were held in Israel, Israel does not any longer occupy the West Bank or Gaza. They left. They left it to the Palestinian people. This part here, the West Bank, is run by the Palestinian Authority.

Many of my colleagues know Mahmoud Abbas was here in Washington today and met with the President. This is a place that's had a great deal of economic growth. There has been a reduction in the amount of violence coming out of the West Bank. There are still problems, and I still think it is outrageous we provide any aid to the West Bank or Gaza so long as Mahmoud Abbas refuses to engage in direct negotiations for peace.

But putting that aside for a moment, in this area here, not the Palestinian Authority or Fatah, but Hamas, the terrorist organization Hamas that is funded by Iran, that gets their weapons from Iran and is in a declared state of war with Israel, has said they don't support a two-state solution, they support a no-State of Israel solution.

Now, who is it that has been supporting that? Actually, it's not Egypt here. They have been working very hard to enforce the border that they have here and help to enforce the embargo. But it's basically Iran. Iran has been exporting terror here, not only here, by the way, but also up here to Hezbollah, to Nasrallah in Lebanon through their agent Syria. But that is why the blockade exists. It's not just because Israel wants conflict. Quite the opposite: it's to try to prevent essentially a war going on here with more and more rockets and more and more armaments coming on shore.

So when this embargo is enforced, it's not only protecting the people of Israel; it's protecting the United States, because this is a way that Iran wants to set up essentially what is an agent of their own in the Middle East. That's what they want.

So when the Israelis boarded the boat, they were set upon. The sailors were beaten. They were stabbed and shot, as I said. And when the dust settles, we had an opportunity, as all the world did, to see what was on that boat.

Let me tell you what the humanitarian aid was that was on that boat: 100 units of metal rods of various length--well, I am sure that was going to feed a lot of children; 200 knives of various sizes; 150 military-style and Turkish-produced self-defense vests, military-style; seven electric saws; 100 pipe wrenches; 50 wooden clubs; 20 axes; a telescopic sight for a gun; four night vision goggles; 100 diving lights; 150 head lamps; and of course boxes and boxes and boxes of propaganda and tapes, all of them in Turkish.

Now, if there was a true interest on the part of this boat of providing food or aid to the people of Gaza, I believe they had an opportunity, obviously, to go to Ashdod and drive it in. They did not want that.

So what is the correct response of the United States and the world community when confronted with these facts? Well, we have a couple of things. First of all, we should understand that even if we are the last country on Earth that understands the facts that I have been laying out here, even if we are the last country on Earth that understands the importance of Israel's role in the region

and how they are set upon in a similar way that the United States was on September 11, except the difference is they have that every day, we should stand with Israel. Even if we are the last country on Earth saying it, we should say, look, the facts are the facts here.

As much as we would like to say Turkey is a player for peace here, no, they were a player for war here. And as much as we might like to say you know what, boy, I wish everyone would just get along in that region, it's Israel who is now sitting at the bargaining table for peace and the Palestinians who are refusing to do so.

But I think, my colleagues, we also have to consider something else, and that is all our relationships with some of the players who are behind us. Let's consider Turkey. This would not have happened were it not for the nation of Turkey taking the role that they did. They funded the ship. They provided international cover. The Turkish Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief, IHH as it's known in Turkey, has been linked to Hamas, and they helped to fund this. The Turkish Government just today voted against sanctions on Iran because, hey, this is apparently an agent, a country that they would like to be an agent for.

And for a lot of time, we kind of worship at the altar of the moderate Muslim state, the moderate Arab states that, you know what, we hope that they are there to be a fulcrum for peace, but it's not unlike a child wanting to see a unicorn. It would be great if it happened, but we have to realize the facts are the facts, and NATO membership for Turkey has to be called into question here. We have to start to say to ourselves whose side is Turkey really going to be on, because what they did here is, rather than being an instrument for peace where they could have very easily said, We're sponsoring this boat. Go to Ashdod right here and offload the humanitarian aid. Or, We're sponsoring this boat. We're not going to have cases of knives on board. We're going to have cases of baby food because we want to help the people of Gaza.

That hasn't happened. And we also have to realize something else, and then I want to yield to some of my colleagues who have joined me.

We have to realize that the default position of Europe and the Arab capitals of the world is always going to be against Israel. We can't allow that and that alone to be the determinant of whether or not, of how our foreign policy is prosecuted. There's a terrorist state that controls Gaza right now. It's a terrorist state that, if they could, they would destroy the United States of America tomorrow, and they're starting with Israel. (*Congressional Record*)

June 1, 2010

While the demand for answers seems to echo in capitals around the world, the facts here are largely known.

We know this tragedy was instigated by Turkey. We know that Israel had not only warned that this boat was in violation of an entirely lawful blockade, but had offered safe harbor to the boat in Ashdod. We also know that a known terrorist group – Hamas – has put its hateful agenda over the well being of its people.

Any loss of life is tragic. This loss was the result of Turkish instigation and Hamas terror policies. Even if we are the only country on earth that sees the facts here, the United States should stand up for Israel. (*Press Release*)

**Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA)**

June 4, 2010

“While details are still emerging following Monday’s events at sea, there are several things we know with certainty. First, the loss of life is tragic and regrettable. Second, Israel has a right and responsibility to defend itself and its people. There is mounting evidence that the activists aboard the Mavi Marmara had questionable aims at best. The flotilla’s spokeswoman herself announced that, ‘This mission is not about delivering humanitarian supplies, it’s about breaking Israel’s siege,’ which would explain why the ship rebuffed offers to deliver humanitarian supplies over land through established procedures. Further there are increasing reports that the Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH), involved in organizing the flotilla, has ties to terrorism networks. Our own State Department spokesman acknowledged this week that representatives of the organization have met with senior Hamas officials in Turkey, Syria and Gaza in recent years. Predictably, there has been a rush to blame Israel at the United Nations and elsewhere around the world. The United States, which has long enjoyed a unique history with Israel based on our mutual commitment to democracy and our shared values, must stand against such efforts and continue to work toward lasting peace in the region, while pressing forward in our efforts to deny the regime in Iran nuclear capabilities.” (*Press Release*)