

AIPAC

Policy Conference 2006 Morning Plenary: The Ties
That Bind: U.S. – Israel Alliance

Mr. John Edwards

Monday, March 6, 2006

Tape 2271

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Policy Conference 2006 Morning Plenary: The Ties that Bind: U.S - Israel Alliance

Mr. John Edwards, Monday March 6, 2006

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1		[START TAPE 1 SIDE A]
2		MR. RANDALL KAPLAN: Hello. My name
3		is Randall Kaplan. I'm an AIPAC
4		board member from Greensboro, North
5	00:48:57	Carolina. The word that comes to
6		mind when one thinks of John Edwards
7		is a simple one. Advocate. Whether
8		it is in the courtroom, on the Senate
9		floor or on the campaign trail or in
10	00:49:14	his new passion as director of the
11		poverty center at the University of
12		North Carolina, John is simply one of
13		the best. And when it comes to
14		fighting terrorism, ensuring security
15	00:49:26	of Israel and working towards peace
16		in the Middle East, we are thankful
17		to have John Edwards, our advocate in
18		our corner. In the Senate he had a
19		strong pro-Israel voting record and
20	00:49:40	as a member of the Senate
21		Intelligence Committee, one of his
22		first trips was to Israel. Let me
23		read a quote from John Edwards about
24		the impact of this trip. I was in
25	00:49:53	Israel a couple of years ago. We

Policy Conference 2006 Morning Plenary: The Ties that Bind: U.S - Israel Alliance

Mr. John Edwards, Monday March 6, 2006

Line#	Timecode	Quote
26		left in the morning, headed to the
27		airport to leave and later in the day
28		I found out that same day not far
29		from where we were staying, the
30	00:50:02	Sobaro [phonetic] Pizzeria was hit by
31		a suicide bomber in Jerusalem. 15
32		people were killed. 6 children were
33		killed. What are the Israeli people
34		supposed to do? How can they
35	00:50:14	continue to watch Israeli children
36		killed by suicide bombers, killed by
37		terrorists? They have not only the
38		right but the obligation to defend
39		themselves. This is a man who has
40	00:50:33	seen first hand what Israelis face
41		and has asserted that Israel's self-
42		defense is simply not its right, but
43		its obligation. This is a man who
44		has a real understanding of the
45	00:50:48	principles and values that bind
46		Jerusalem and Washington. Ladies and
47		gentlemen, I'm pleased to introduce
48		to you, former Senator, former Vice-
49		Presidential candidate, and I suspect
50	00:52:02	future Presidential candidate, John

Policy Conference 2006 Morning Plenary: The Ties that Bind: U.S - Israel Alliance

Mr. John Edwards, Monday March 6, 2006

Line#	Timecode	Quote
51		Edwards.
52		MR. JOHN EDWARDS: Good morning.
53		What a pleasure to be here with all
54		of you. Let me first say thank you
55	00:51:30	to Randall and to Randall's wonderful
56		wife, Kathy who have been long and
57		dear friends and supporters of mine.
58		And let me also say a word about my
59		wife, Elizabeth, because when I'm
60	00:51:39	traveling around the country now,
61		people often ask how she's doing. A
62		lot of you know I'm sure, that the
63		day after the election, November 2 nd ,
64		my wife, Elizabeth was diagnosed with
65	00:51:49	breast cancer. The good news is
66		Elizabeth's doing great. She's doing
67		very, very well. She finished her
68		treatment last summer. We actually
69		had a bunch of tests done just before
70	00:52:05	Christmas, this past Christmas and I
71		always knock on wood when I say this,
72		she's cancer free, so we're all very
73		pleased about that. I want to tell
74		you a quick story from the campaign.
75	00:52:20	I have lots of stories from the

Policy Conference 2006 Morning Plenary: The Ties that Bind: U.S - Israel Alliance

Mr. John Edwards, Monday March 6, 2006

Line#	Timecode	Quote
76		Presidential campaign, but only one
77		I'm going to tell this morning. And
78		actually I know that Vice President
79		Cheney will be here to speak with you
80	00:52:28	tomorrow. This is a story that I
81		know he's heard and he enjoys too, so
82		it happened the night of the Vice
83		Presidential debate, which I'm sure a
84		lot of you saw on television. It
85	00:52:38	took place in Cleveland, Ohio. About
86		43, 44 million people, 43, 44 million
87		people watched the debate on
88		television. And when the debate was
89		over, they did what they always do at
90	00:52:49	these debates. The cameras are still
91		rolling. The brought the families up
92		on stage. So my wife, Elizabeth came
93		up first. Then my daughter, my older
94		daughter Kate, who some of you will
95	00:52:58	remember came up. She lives in New
96		York now, works for Vanity Fair
97		magazine. And then my two younger
98		kids who some of you will remember,
99		Emma Claire, who was six at the time,
100	00:53:08	and then Jack who was four came up on

Policy Conference 2006 Morning Plenary: The Ties that Bind: U.S - Israel Alliance

Mr. John Edwards, Monday March 6, 2006

Line#	Timecode	Quote
101		the stage. Jack came running over to
102		me. He jumped up in my arms. He
103		said dad. I said, not now son, we're
104		still waving to the camera. A couple
105	00:53:20	more minutes passed and he said, dad.
106		And I said, not yet, we're still
107		waving. Finally he said dad, and I
108		said what? And he said, which one's
109		Cheney? It's a great privilege for
110	00:53:38	me to be here with all of you today
111		and I want to say first, I appreciate
112		all the work that you do to give
113		strength to the extraordinarily
114		important and vital partnership
115	00:53:48	between the United States and Israel,
116		which is something I believe in very
117		deeply and have for a long time. For
118		more than - for more than half a
119		century, the alliance between our
120	00:54:02	countries has been one of the most
121		enduring and most important standing
122		for our shared values, our shared
123		values of liberty, opportunity and
124		hope, and [2271 @ 10:12:13] I
125		especially want to thank

Policy Conference 2006 Morning Plenary: The Ties that Bind: U.S - Israel Alliance

Mr. John Edwards, Monday March 6, 2006

Line#	Timecode	Quote
126	00:54:12	AIPAC for all that you do to support
127		this partnership, and for helping all
128		of -
129		[END OF TAPE ONE SIDE A]
130		-----[START TAPE ONE SIDE B]
131	00:01:14	MR. JOHN EDWARDS: - us to think
132		through the very tough issues which
133		are going on right now in this great
134		policy conference. Your work is
135		critically important today when
136	00:01:23	America and Israel face so many
137		challenges, which I know you will be
138		discussing during the course of this
139		conference. I want to begin this
140		morning by saying just a few words
141	00:01:31	about a man who did so much to help
142		Israel face its challenges, Ariel
143		Sharon. Prime Minister - Prime
144		Minister Sharon is one of the giants
145		of Israel's history and one of
146	00:01:48	America's great friends, and I myself
147		was - I appreciate today the time
148		that I was able to spend with him
149		when I was in Israel. Throughout his
150		career in public service and

Policy Conference 2006 Morning Plenary: The Ties that Bind: U.S - Israel Alliance

Mr. John Edwards, Monday March 6, 2006

Line#	Timecode	Quote
151	00:01:58	especially during the past few years
152		with his historic decision to
153		evacuate Gaza, Prime Minister Sharon
154		acted in the only way he knew how.
155		He made brave, bold decisions to
156	00:02:09	ensure a strong and secure Israel.
157		His legacy, commitment to service,
158		strong leadership, outstanding
159		patriotism, and a deep belief in the
160		vital partnership between Israel and
161	00:02:20	the United States is something that
162		all of us should admire, must always
163		remember and never stop working to
164		uphold. During this difficult time,
165		all Israelis should know that America
166	00:02:36	stands with them, remaining committed
167		to their security and their efforts
168		to build a better and more peaceful
169		future, and as we all wish the Prime
170		Minister our love and affection for
171	00:02:48	he and for his family, our thoughts
172		and prayers are with him every day.
173		More than anyone else, Prime Minister
174		Sharon understood that a strong
175		Israel is a safe Israel, and we need

Policy Conference 2006 Morning Plenary: The Ties that Bind: U.S - Israel Alliance

Mr. John Edwards, Monday March 6, 2006

Line#	Timecode	Quote
176	00:02:59	to remember, all of us need to
177		remember the example that he set,
178		especially as we consider the
179		extraordinary security threats that
180		Israel faces today. Let's start with
181	00:03:09	Iran's nuclear ambitions, which I
182		believe is the single greatest
183		security threat, not only to Israel,
184		but to the United States. In fact
185		today is a pivotal day with the IAEA
186	00:03:26	meeting to send the matter to the
187		U.N. Security Council to take action.
188		It's about time, is what I have to
189		say about that. For years I have
190		argued that the United States has not
191	00:03:40	been doing enough to deal with the
192		growing threat in Iran. While we've
193		talked about the dangers of nuclear
194		terrorism, we've largely stood on the
195		sidelines and the problems got worse.
196	00:03:51	I believe that for far too long we've
197		abdicated our responsibility to deal
198		with the Iranian threat to the
199		Europeans. That is not the way to
200		deal with an unacceptable threat to

Policy Conference 2006 Morning Plenary: The Ties that Bind: U.S - Israel Alliance

Mr. John Edwards, Monday March 6, 2006

Line#	Timecode	Quote
201	00:04:01	America, and an unacceptable threat
202		to Israel. Iran's recent actions
203		beginning with the reprocessing of
204		uranium, refusing to cooperate with
205		international inspections, makes
206	00:04:16	clear that it intends to build
207		nuclear weapons. And the Iranian
208		President's statements such as the
209		despicable description of the
210		Holocaust as a myth or his ugly
211	00:04:27	pledge to wipe Israel off the map,
212		you know, when he says these kind of
213		things, I take him at his word. And
214		we need to treat it as a very serious
215		statement. And we all know that if
216	00:04:43	Iran goes nuclear it increases the
217		likelihood that Saudi Arabia would be
218		next, making Israel's neighborhood
219		even more dangerous. It's good that
220		we're finally at the point where the
221	00:04:52	international community is ready to
222		confront Iran with a clear choice.
223		Give up your nuclear ambitions or
224		suffer the consequences. But I
225		believe that with more engaged and

Policy Conference 2006 Morning Plenary: The Ties that Bind: U.S - Israel Alliance

Mr. John Edwards, Monday March 6, 2006

Line#	Timecode	Quote
226	00:05:02	more active American leadership we
227		could have been - in fact we should
228		have been at this point months ago.
229		An active American leadership will be
230		needed in the days ahead to ensure
231		that our
232	00:05:12	European allies as well as countries
233		like China and Russia stand with us
234		together to confront Iran at the
235		Security Council with meaningful
236		sanctions. The truth is that for too
237	00:05:29	long we've muddled through on this
238		threat. Now we need to make a clear
239		stand that Iran cannot and will not
240		have nuclear weapons. Keeping
241		nuclear weapons - keeping nuclear
242	00:05:42	weapons out of Tehran's hands is a
243		strategic imperative for the security
244		of the United States, for Israel and
245		for the world, and we need to do what
246		we can to help encourage democratic
247	00:05:50	change in Iran. Iran is the greatest
248		external threat facing Israel, but
249		just as alarming - just as alarming
250		is the threat on its doorstep. A

Policy Conference 2006 Morning Plenary: The Ties that Bind: U.S - Israel Alliance

Mr. John Edwards, Monday March 6, 2006

Line#	Timecode	Quote
251		Palestinian leadership led by Hamas.
252	00:06:03	Hamas makes no effort to disguise its
253		top priority, to destroy Israel. Its
254		charter promises to raise the banner
255		of Allah over every inch of
256		Palestine, and spouts the darkest of
257	00:06:17	anti-Semitic claims. I'll never
258		forget, and I heard Randall make
259		reference to this just a minute ago,
260		I'll never forget on August 9 th , 2001
261		as I was just ending a trip to
262	00:06:27	Jerusalem, when Hamas suicide bomber
263		wearing an explosive belt of nails,
264		screws, nuts, bolts, blew up the
265		S'Barro Pizzeria not far from where
266		we were staying at the King David
267	00:06:40	hotel. 15 innocent people died. 6
268		children died. This is now the face
269		of the Palestinian leadership. With
270		such a threat, Israel not only has
271		the right. Israel has the obligation
272	00:06:58	to defend itself, and we have to be
273		there with them as they do it. This
274		means continuing to deepen our
275		economic ties and to strengthen our

Policy Conference 2006 Morning Plenary: The Ties that Bind: U.S - Israel Alliance

Mr. John Edwards, Monday March 6, 2006

Line#	Timecode	Quote
276		military cooperation so that Israel
277	00:07:36	maintains its qualitative edge. It
278		means continuing our strong
279		diplomatic relationship and standing
280		up to those who would try to use
281		international organizations to
282	00:07:46	isolate or unfairly punish Israel.
283		It also means thinking creatively
284		about ways to create Israel to some
285		of our most important and successful
286		security institutions. For example,
287	00:07:56	I believe that we should be exploring
288		ways to upgrade Israel's relationship
289		with NATO. This could mean a
290		stronger strategic - this could mean
291		a stronger, a closer strategic and
292	00:08:10	operational relationship. It could
293		mean more exchanges and planning
294		cooperation. It could even someday
295		mean membership. NATO is the
296		greatest democratic security alliance
297	00:08:21	in the world today. It now has a
298		mission that goes far beyond Europe
299		as we've seen in Afghanistan. So
300		it's only natural that we should work

Policy Conference 2006 Morning Plenary: The Ties that Bind: U.S - Israel Alliance

Mr. John Edwards, Monday March 6, 2006

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301		to deepen its cooperation with
302	00:08:31	Israel. And I believe the United
303		States should lead this effort to
304		strengthen NATO's relationship with
305		Israel. We also have to send a clear
306		- crystal clear, unmistakable message
307	00:08:47	to the Hamas led Palestinian
308		leadership. You will not get one
309		dime of American taxpayer dollars as
310		long as you refuse to recognize
311		Israel's right to exist as a Jewish
312	00:08:58	state, abide by past agreements and
313		end your support for terrorism. Now
314		that Hamas has to deal with the
315		responsibility of governance, we
316		cannot let it off the hook. It can't
317	00:09:22	get anything for free. And while the
318		international community should
319		continue to help the Palestinian
320		people's humanitarian needs, like
321		food and medicine, outside assistance
322	00:09:31	for Palestinian development or
323		governance is not an entitlement, and
324		we need to work with our European
325		allies and others like Russia, to

Policy Conference 2006 Morning Plenary: The Ties that Bind: U.S - Israel Alliance

Mr. John Edwards, Monday March 6, 2006

Line#	Timecode	Quote
326		ensure that any money that goes to
327	00:09:41	help the Palestinian people does not
328		end up lining terrorist pockets.
329		International - International unity
330		on this issue is absolutely
331		essential. In fact after I leave
332	00:09:53	here this morning, I'll be going with
333		former secretary Jack Kemp to
334		announce the findings of a U.S.-
335		Russia task force for the Council on
336		Foreign Relations that Jack Kemp and
337	00:10:04	I have been chairing this past course
338		- over the course of the past year.
339		U.S.-Russia cooperation can in fact
340		help the United States deal with some
341		of the most difficult problems we
342	00:10:13	face, yet regrettably that
343		cooperation has become the exception,
344		not the norm. Our report, in fact,
345		is a wake up call to get the U.S.-
346		Russia relationship back on track to
347	00:10:23	meet the challenges that face us and
348		face the world. In fact, Russia's
349		behavior toward Hamas is a very
350		important test for Russia. What

Policy Conference 2006 Morning Plenary: The Ties that Bind: U.S - Israel Alliance

Mr. John Edwards, Monday March 6, 2006

Line#	Timecode	Quote
351		Russia does next will have serious
352	00:10:34	ramifications for our relationship
353		with Russia. And I want to end this
354		morning by saying just a few words
355		about what I think is the great issue
356		facing America here at home, and the
357	00:10:46	great issue facing America around the
358		world. I believe that there is a
359		huge void in moral leadership in
360		America today. When you watch what's
361		happening - most of you saw this on
362	00:10:56	your television screens, with the
363		result of the hurricane hitting the
364		gulf coast. And for many Americans,
365		for many Americans they saw the face
366		of poverty as we saw in the lower
367	00:11:07	ninth ward, for example in New
368		Orleans. A face that they either
369		hadn't seen or didn't want to think
370		about. You know, I have a very
371		simple view about this. In a country
372	00:11:15	of our wealth and our prosperity, to
373		have 37 million people who wake up in
374		poverty every day is wrong, and we -
375		all of us together - have a

Policy Conference 2006 Morning Plenary: The Ties that Bind: U.S - Israel Alliance

Mr. John Edwards, Monday March 6, 2006

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376		responsibility to do something about
377	00:11:25	it. And it's also important for us
378		to recognize that we are not the only
379		ones that saw what happened in New
380		Orleans. We're not the only ones who
381		saw the face of poverty in America.
382	00:11:40	The world saw the face of poverty in
383		America. I saw a publication from
384		overseas shortly after the flood hit
385		New Orleans and it had pictures of
386		victims in the lower ninth ward. And
387	00:11:50	the headline was the shaming of
388		America. The world is watching.
389		They want to know whether the most
390		prosperous, powerful nation on the
391		face of the planet is actually going
392	00:12:01	to turn its back on 37 million of its
393		own people who wake up in poverty
394		every day. There's so much
395		opportunity, so much good to be done
396		by helping people help themselves.
397	00:12:14	And it's not just what we do here at
398		home. It's not just addressing what
399		I believe is the great moral issue
400		here in America. It's also America

Policy Conference 2006 Morning Plenary: The Ties that Bind: U.S - Israel Alliance

Mr. John Edwards, Monday March 6, 2006

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401		providing moral leadership around the
402	00:12:24	world. You know I was in Britain not
403		long ago, and I spent an hour and a
404		half with the Prime Minister, Tony
405		Blair, and listening - just the two
406		of us - and listening to him talking
407	00:12:34	about Britain's attempt to lead on
408		the big issues, the moral issues that
409		face the world, you know, poverty in
410		America is moderate compared to
411		poverty around the world. Half of
412	00:12:43	the planet lives on \$2 or less a day.
413		Almost 3 billion people. Where is
414		America? Where is American
415		leadership? While we have this
416		extraordinary policy conference
417	00:12:55	today, there's a genocide going on in
418		Sudan in Darfur. Black people are
419		being killed, driven from their
420		homes. Black women are being - black
421		women are being raped. We said,
422	00:13:10	after Rwanda, America said, this will
423		never happen again. You will
424		remember the phrase. Not on our
425		watch. It's happening right now.

Policy Conference 2006 Morning Plenary: The Ties that Bind: U.S - Israel Alliance

Mr. John Edwards, Monday March 6, 2006

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426		And where is America? Where is
427	00:13:21	American leadership? We have to fill
428		this void in moral leadership in the
429		world. Not only do we need to do it
430		for ourselves, because it says
431		something about the character of our
432	00:13:37	country. We have to do it for the
433		world, because when we don't lead,
434		there is an enormous void. And I
435		want to say, I know that we have a
436		big crowd of young people here, which
437	00:13:48	I'm very pleased about. I want to
438		say something to the young people in
439		this audience. Young people have
440		changed America before and you can
441		change America again. I saw it when
442	00:14:00	I was a teenager. I saw young people
443		lead, not follow, lead the fight for
444		civil rights in America. They
445		weren't waiting for their parents to
446		tell them what was right and what was
447	00:14:10	wrong. They weren't waiting to be
448		told what to do. They saw it. They
449		saw an injustice and they went out
450		and fought with backbone and energy

Policy Conference 2006 Morning Plenary: The Ties that Bind: U.S - Israel Alliance

Mr. John Edwards, Monday March 6, 2006

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451		and passion for what was right.
452	00:14:20	Young people - young people have
453		changed America before. You can
454		change it again. We saw it even more
455		recently with efforts on college
456		university campuses to topple this
457	00:14:35	brutal apartheid regime in South
458		Africa. What I would say to the
459		young people who are here, I'll
460		borrow a line from an extraordinary
461		woman who passed away a few years
462	00:14:44	ago, but who was an activist who
463		organized people around important
464		social causes. She would always end
465		her speeches by saying, you know, the
466		leaders we've been waiting for are
467	00:14:55	us. She's exactly right. We can't
468		wait. We have to lead. We have to
469		keep America strong and secure. We
470		have to help keep Israel strong and
471		secure and we have to show the world
472	00:15:07	what the character and morality of
473		the America we believe in is. God
474		bless you all and thank you. It's my
475		honor and privilege to be with you.

**Policy Conference 2006 Morning Plenary: The Ties that Bind: U.S -
Israel Alliance**

Mr. John Edwards, Monday March 6, 2006

Line#	Timecode	Quote
476		[END OF TRANSCRIPT]