

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid
AIPAC Policy Conference 2007
March 12, 2007

Norm, thank you very much. I appreciate your friendship and I appreciate the introduction. I'm also grateful to my friend Harriet Zimmerman.

And of course I would be remiss if I didn't mention my partner, Shelley Berkley.

There's no policy organization in the country with the grass-roots power of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

And the subject for which this organization advocates – the safety and security of Israel could not be more important. Tonight's program is another testament to the absolute necessity of AIPAC and to the support this organization enjoys from the entire Congress.

Over the last three months Senator McConnell and I in our roles of Senate Majority and Minority Leaders have had our public disagreements, but when it comes to the peace, security, and freedom of Israel we stand side-by-side.

In the course of history the people of Israel have traveled a long difficult road toward freedom. This road toward freedom contains inspiring memories, inspiring testimonies like those of Mordechai and Tamara Klein. These survivors of Dachau and Auschwitz are the parents of Abner Klein. Abner, a member of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department SWAT Team is frequently assigned to my security detail when I travel home to Nevada. I had the pleasure of spending the day with Abner's parents when I visited Israel last year; they're remarkable individuals whose story of survival symbolizes what Israel is all about. The road toward freedom is also filled with stories like that of Helen and Arkadi May. Helen was a Russian refusnik who I first met in the Soviet Union almost 25 years ago. She was a surrogate of Natan Sharansky. And as a result, this tough, courageous woman and her husband faced persecution in the former Soviet Union. Even though Arkadi is now deceased their life's dream living in Israel has been fulfilled. Sadly this road toward freedom though for many has required if not most great sacrifice.

On my last visit to Israel I made a special visit to Jerusalem's renowned Holocaust Museum, the Yad Vashem. There my wife, Landra and I were able to learn the fate of her father's family the Goldfarb's. Landra's father, Israel or Earl Goldfarb emigrated from the city of Novograd, Ukraine in the early 1900s. Unfortunately the Goldfarb's that remained suffered a much different fate than my father-in-law. Along with millions of others seven Goldfarb's were killed by the Nazis

and their names have been listed in Yad Vashem's *Book of Martyrs and Heroes*. Tonight the road traveled by Israel Goldfarb, the grandfather of my children who by virtue of their mother's lineage are eligible for Israeli citizenship.

The road traveled by Helen May, the road traveled by the Klein's – that road is still open but people of Israel still move forward but on their journey they do not travel alone. In their quest for freedom, in their quest for liberty, in their quest for peace, the Israeli people have no stronger friend than the United States of America.

Together we continue the fight against tyranny and terrorism and fight for the common values for which we both stand. Let me be clear, threats to Israel's security have not diminished despite the country's continued commitment to peace. Let me be clear, Israel's security is constantly in danger. The threat of violence is real. Last summer the world watched in horror as violence flared again when Hezbollah lobbed hundreds of rockets at helpless Israeli citizens. It was another reminder that Israel's right to live in peace is not a reality. Let me be clear, Israel's neighbor to the north Lebanon has been overrun by extremists seeking to harm Israel.

We all must do what we can to support a democratic Lebanon that seeks peace. However Hezbollah has must be shown for what it really is – a terrorist organization. With regard to the Palestinians, a two-state solution is in the interest of all parties and I hope that Israelis and Palestinians can soon resume a real negotiating process but never – no, never should the State of Israel contract with the Palestinians unless all their government, Hamas included, recognizes the sovereignty of Israel and agrees to stop fomenting violence.

All members of the Palestinian government must be committed to non-violence, recognition of Israel and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations including the roadmap. Every United States president and every United States Congress since World War II has fought to bring freedom, stability, and prosperity to the Middle East. As Israel knows all too well, the War on Terror did not begin on 9/11 but decades earlier. This struggle will be with us for years to come. It is a struggle of moderates against extremism that we, the United States, Israel and our friends must and will win.

We see the difficulty of this struggle in Iraq today. You heard earlier from the Vice President who said we must succeed in Iraq. I could not agree more. We will stand with the Iraqi people to stabilize the country and insure security in the Middle East. But I submit the current course in Iraq is leading to failure. A strategy that costs America more than \$8 billion a month is not making it safer and it's playing right into the hands of Osama Bin Laden, Al Qaeda and their allies.

The war is plunging the Middle East into instability and insecurity. To stay stubbornly on the current course is to increase the chances of a strategic defeat for our country, the United States. To win in Iraq there must be a change of course and that is while we'll continue to push in Congress. Regrettably the longer Iraq remains destabilized the more it emboldens Iran. Iran continues to thumb its nose at the United States and the world. It must not be allowed to develop a nuclear weapon.

The world must stay unified in condemning Iran's march toward nuclear weapons. The UN Security Council has approved sanctions but these sanctions must be implemented and the world community must keep pressure on Iran. Iran, you see is a very mixed bag; they have a young population yearning for liberalism and democracy, a population that has repeatedly demonstrated its desire for freedom in the polling group, but Iran also has a theocratic oligarchy committed to repressing these units. The two cannot forever co-exist. Eventually the theocratic revolution of the 1970s must recognize reality and accede to the wishes of the Iranian people or it must devour both its young and itself. Totalitarian rule is inconsistent with progress. The Iranian people know this; their government bureaucracy knows this at least in part; their President, their intelligence apparatus, and their Mullahs will have to learn it in one fashion or another. The revolution does not always devour its young. Sometimes the young devour the revolution.

There's a powerful lesson to learn in the yearnings of Iran's younger generation, a lesson that extends throughout the Middle East. Young people present a great opportunity for progress. They can be the catalyst for change if they do not first learn to hate. I am appalled that many in the Middle East, countries we consider allies, continue to promote anti-Semitism in their societies and in their schools.

They profess peace but teach their children to hate. We should have a zero-tolerance toward this practice. How can a country be called an ally of the United States if they're giving their children anti-Semitic propaganda? The battle of ideas for the hearts of minds is every bit as important as the battle we wage with guns and war. As Ariel Sharon told us *the sword alone cannot decide this bitter dispute*. I personally have fond memories of Ariel Sharon. This man who continues to struggle for his life has had such a profound impact on all of us. I remember traveling to Israel in August of 2001; there I met Sharon then in the minority and that's to say the least in Tel Aviv. He spent two hours with me, a single United States Senator, going over map after map, intelligence report after intelligence report. He had you know the idea that he someday would be Prime Minister. I didn't think he would; I was wrong. Ariel Sharon was right. It's because of men and women like Sharon and Barak and Netanyahu and Peres and Rabin

and Shamir and Begin and Meir and Eshkol and Sharett and Ben-Gurion that the people of Israel have come so far in this long road of Israel history.

There's a well known saying – *when the cannons roar the muses are silent*. A similar idea was expressed a long time ago by Cicero when he said *during war the laws are silent*. These sayings are regrettable. They reflect neither the existing law nor the desirable law. It is when the cannons roar that we especially need the laws. Every struggle of the State against terrorism or any other enemy must be conducted according to rules and law.

There is always law which the State must comply; there are no black holes. There are no black holes. That quotation from a recent Supreme Court Decision is one I admire; I respect it for its content, for its high idealism, and for its fundamental commitment to the core values of democracy. This profound decision was issued in December of 2006 in a case called *The Public Committee against Torture v. the State*. I admire so much it was issued by the Israeli Supreme Court.

That devotion by the State of Israel not just to lip service but to the actual application of law is one reason I so appreciate and support Israel's continuing struggle for peace and justice. Faced – faced with insolvable dilemmas, caught between the compelling needs of security and openness of force and negotiation of the public happiness and the public safety Israel has served as a beacon for the rule of law over the power of man. It was what we in the United States have in common with our friends and allies in Israel. Our nations both represent the shining city on a hill, the beacon to nations and the light of the world. Together we, Israel and the United States, must do whatever it takes to keep that beacon shining strong in the face of terrorism and violence.

Together the – the Congress and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee will strive to fuel the light of freedom glowing here in America and in faraway Israel. That is my commitment and I know it's yours. Thank you and good-night.