

House Republican Leader John Boehner
AIPAC Policy Conference 2008
June 4, 2008

Well John thank you for the introduction and ladies and gentlemen thank you for the opportunity to be here at your Legislative Policy Conference once again. I understand this is the largest Conference that AIPAC has had and want to congratulate for its giant success.

I've worked with all of you since I was elected to Congress in 1990. And I'm especially pleased to be here today and want to say first thank you; thank you to all of you and your commitment to Israel and your commitment to the--the pact that we have in America between the American people and the Israeli people. It's a pact that you continue to support, to foster, and to strengthen and I as one simple American want to say thank you to all of you for your commitment.

Let me also say that over the years I've had the pleasure to work with your AIPAC staff here in Washington and while we've had many discussions, most of them positive, some of them a little firmer than others, the AIPAC staff here in Washington does all of you and the community a great service. They're professional; they know what they're doing and they're very helpful to all of us.

Last month we were pleased to celebrate an anniversary with an important friend and ally, the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel. America has no closer ally than Israel. And we're not allies simply by chance; our friendship is based on a passionate belief in share values, and as a bipartisan Congressional commitment to this friendship. As Speaker Pelosi and I have worked together on a bipartisan co-del to Israel to celebrate their anniversary last month, I deeply regret that I was unable to attend at the last minute over some health issues that plagued me then and continue to plague me today. But I had been in Israel in March and led a bipartisan Congressional Delegation and even that trip was as meaningful to me as any that I have made. The trip crystallized for me the direct, real, and substantial threats that--that are faced by ordinary Israelis each and every single day.

And since its creation, Israel as you all know has lived under a constant threat of aggression and has stood bravely against the rise of radical Islam. And no nation understands the threat better--the threat of terror and vigilance that's necessary in order to confront it than the State of Israel. And let me be clear; the danger remains and must be confronted with courage, conviction and decisiveness. Two days ago

the President of Iran promised that Israel would *disappear*, and I don't think the--the message could be more obvious. Iran is a threat to Israel and Iran is a threat to the United States.

Iran is the chief sponsor of terrorism around the world; it is directly linked to organizations targeting American soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iran trains, finances, and equips groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, groups that support violence and destruction and the end of Israel. But by far the greatest danger that we all face is Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons. Iran has not come clear about its nuclear program; Iran's refusal to abide by the Nuclear Nonproliferation Act that encouraged a Middle East arms race. And obviously Iran's possession of nuclear weapons is an unacceptable danger to the United States and to Israel. The United States --the United States must not reward this type of destructive behavior through endless and conditional dialogue--none. Our message should be clear and unmistakable; we will not legitimize a leader who has repeatedly threatened the very existence of Israel and the United States.

My friends, the threat of terrorism is real. And the enemies of America and Israel are the same. The terrorist aim is to create a domestic political environment here in the United States in hopes that it will prompt America to leave the Middle East and this has been their goal for decades. I go back to the takeover of the revolutionaries in Tehran in 1979 or the bombings of our--of our Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983 or what they did in Somalia in 1993 or the Khobar terrorist bombing in Saudi Arabia in 1996 or the East Africa Embassy bombings in 1998 or how about the bombing of the USS Cole off of Yemen in the year 2000? All of this prompting, trying to prompt a public opinion in America that America should withdrawal, that America should not stand up for our friends and our allies in the Middle East. But in Iraq the United States military is making a real and measurable difference and the success of General Petraeus' plan over the last year is unmistakable. I mentioned this last year not to put people in an uncomfortable situation but I believe that what is happening in Iraq is of significant importance to the United States, to the very existence of Israel and stability in the Middle East.

Many in Congress last year --many in Congress last year said it would never work--that the War in Iraq was lost and I think they were wrong; frankly I think they were very wrong. And sadly --and sadly you're not going to hear a lot about the success from other members of Congress this morning and the good news that is coming out of Iraq. I could detail all of it for you but it would be a mistake of historic proportions to retreat from Iraq despite the clear progress and to create a power vacuum that the Iranians would just gladly go in and take over.

Thank you; thank you. Now I can guarantee all of you--I will not be the longest speaker here this morning nor will I be the most eloquent. But as I'm fond of telling my colleagues and my friends around the country I like to speak English. I didn't get elected to Congress because I wanted to be a Congressman. I got elected to Congress because I wanted to do something. Our job in this room whether those of us who are elected or those of you who are in this audience is to create a brighter, better future for our kids and theirs, and the only way--the only way that happens is for all of us--elected and un-elected to stand up for what we believe in and not just say words but to take actions--actions that support the very beliefs that we have.

And so while some of what I'll say will please most of you I hope, some of what I say may not please all of you. But I will always tell you the truth as I know it and show you the convictions that I have as a member of Congress to do the right things for what I believe are the right reasons. Failure in Iraq is going to lead to instability throughout the region. It's simple in my view; if we lose Iraq we lose the region and frankly we make it far more dangerous for Israel to exist. If we do not stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons we will lose Israel. And if we do not take seriously the words and intentions of Islamic militants we lose Israel. The threats facing the United States and Israel must and will be met with an equal determination to preserve our God-given liberties. The bonds of trust between Israel and America have never been stronger or more important than they are right now.

I once again want to say--say thank you; thank you for your commitment to making this relationship stronger. Thank you for your commitment to come here to go to the Hill and to help educate members of Congress about the importance of this relationship. You play a vital role in helping to educate members to the strong relationship that we have and helping to develop the commitment in each of them to helping preserve and build this relationship, a relationship that has lasted some 60 years and a relationship in my view that should last forever. God bless the State of Israel and God bless all of you.