

Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell
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Well thank you very much Tim and good morning everyone; welcome to town. It's always a pleasure to be with AIPAC; it is of course a special honor this year as we mark the 60th anniversary of the modern State of Israel.

As any parent or teacher will attest you usually get more of what you celebrate. It is my hope that as a result of this year's celebrations we'll see even greater things from this nation of miracles in the years to come.

I see a lot of familiar faces and many old friends. There is one old friend I'm sad to say who is not with us this year and that's Bubba Mitchell. Bubba meant a lot to AIPAC and he meant a lot to me and to Elaine. In nearly a quarter of century of friendship he and I saw eye-to-eye on just about everything except of course who should come out on top in a match-up between the Louisville Cardinals and the Alabama Crimson Tide. Now Louisville and Alabama actually played once in the 1991 Fiesta Bowl. Bubba and I were there, and Louisville of course won the game, and as you can imagine I made sure never to mention that game ever again. And I certainly never reminded Bubba of the score--34 to 7. Bubba and I shared a deep love of college football and a passion for public service. We were frequent traveling companions and Elaine and I were frequent guests at the Mitchell home in Mobile. Bubba and I were also born in Alabama, though I was born so far north in Alabama up in Sheffield that he practically considered me a Yankee. He was a good friend and a great man and he supported many worthy causes in a full and rewarding life. But above all, Bubba valued his family. Arlene is here and I know Abe was here earlier and they're carrying on the Mitchell tradition. And I want to thank them; it is a fitting tribute to Bubba's efforts on behalf of Israel and America that AIPAC's new home now bears his name.

Israel has always been an important part of my work. One of the first international trips I ever took was a trip to Israel in the late '70s, and I've been back many times since through my years as Chairman and ranking member of the Senate Foreign Operations Appropriation Subcommittee. During my time on the Subcommittee I sponsored several pieces of major legislation in support of Israel including a Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act of 2006 which Tim referred to ; that Bill as you know restricts aid to the Palestinian Authority unless and until it acknowledges Israel's right to exist, commits itself to prior

agreements, institutes financial transparency and begins to dismantle its terrorist infrastructure.

More recently I co-sponsored a Bill that would impose sanctions on Iran and on any nation that supports its nuclear program and I-- and looking ahead, the singular challenge posed by the Iranian regime all by guarantees that future Congresses will have an opportunity to even further strengthen American Israeli ties.

You know anniversaries are a good time to look back and as we reflect on the close relationship that Israel and the United States have enjoyed over the years the first thing to note is that it wasn't inevitable. The greatest initial resistance didn't come from any segment of the electorate, but from the US State Department. Fortunately for Israel, President Truman had the foresight and wisdom in the end not to go along with his Advisors at State. He had been convinced in private conversations with Chaim Weitzman among others that the choice for the Jews was a choice between Statehood and extermination. And as Truman later wrote, he was not going to let the pinstriped--the striped pants conspirators over at the State Department interfere with his plans.

I note for the record that America's thirty-third President has a rather colorful way of speaking. Truman never regretted his decision and he was deeply moved by the gratitude of the Jewish people. This was vividly illustrated by a meeting Truman had with the Chief Rabbi of Israel. Here's how a Truman Advisor, David Niles, remembered the event. He wrote *when the Chief Rabbi of Israel, Isaac Halevi Herzog called at the White House he told Truman, God put you in your mother's womb so you would be the instrument to bring the rebirth of Israel after 2,000 years.* I thought he was overdoing things but when I looked over at the President tears were running down his cheeks. Truman's reaction to Rabbi Herzog is a powerful reminder that the bond between Israel and the United States has always been extended far beyond sober strategic interests. As--as many have noted before, both nations were born in conflict; both were built up through the hard work and pioneering spirit of people who had come from many nations and both have relied in all this on a foundational respect for the elements of a free society--Rule of Law, Free Press, Freedom of Religion and Deep Respect for Individual Rights and Human Dignity.

Indeed, America's kinship with the Jewish people is as old as America itself. Our very first President saw that this land would always be a home away from home for Jews who came here after centuries of fearful isolation. In a letter to the Jewish Congregation of Newport, he even prayed for it; in the years that followed America's Jewish immigrants would join millions of others from nations around the world in building up America's political, cultural, artistic, economic, civic and

religious life. America's Jewish immigrants would fight and die beside their countrymen in two World Wars. They would share the same hopes and fears that all Americans did and when the time came for them to establish a homeland of their own it was only natural that most Americans would support it. This is amply confirmed by the historical record. As early as 1922 Congress had affirmed the central principle of the Balfour Declaration; by 1945 33-States representing 86-percent of the US population had passed Resolutions favoring a Jewish State. And two years before Truman officially recognized Israel, the State Department conducted a poll that showed strong support for a Jewish State by a vast majority of Americans.

When David Ben Gurion declared a new Jewish State at midnight Tel Aviv time on May 14, 1948 one thing was clear; most Americans were very happy about it.

Over the years that bond has grown stronger thanks in large part to the extraordinary bipartisan support that Israel has traditionally enjoyed here in Washington. In a town where the two Parties seldom agree on much Israel has always been a notable exception. Beyond our shared values, Americans of all political stripes respect and admire Israel's astonishing achievement in subduing its desert home and preserving freedom and democratic values in the face of constant, constant security threats. Still it was not until fairly recently until any of us fully appreciated all that Israel's achievement involved, particularly in the area of security. America and Israel have always been closely united in a desire for peace and in a shared belief that the foundation for peace is strength. But it was not until terrorists brought their murderous ideology to American shores that Americans saw as the Israelis always had that freedom's defense would have to be a constant often painful fight. Israel has lived with mortal threats from day one. And it has earned America's respect by its firmness and resolve in beating its enemies back. But Al Qaeda forced America to look even more closely at Israel's daily experience with the fight and to draw important lessons from it. Chief among them was the--the necessity of vigilance and the realization that the terrorist threat would be an enduring one. Israel's success over the years isn't the result of good luck. Every success was built on a solid foundation of expert training, exceptional tools, a commanding knowledge of the enemy and an unshakable commitment to never rest. Indeed, one could say that the only thing Israel ever achieved without a prior demonstration of strength was Statehood itself, an act that one former Israeli leaders--leader described as *the last instance in diplomatic history of persuasion without power*.

This new level of vigilance was and remains a difficult lesson for Americans to learn. Historically we as a nation have always tended to

resist foreign entanglements. To use Washington's words, *or failing that we've intended to withdraw once conflicts have been resolved*. If America stepped into a fight it was usually because we had been dragged into it; the result was that as a young nation America's foreign policy leaders saw the balance of power as something that other countries--the corrupt ones, the monarchies, worried about but not us.

Yet as our nation grew in size and strength old nations passed away. After the First World War we saw the price of isolation and the rise of totalitarian regimes from one end of the world to the other. It was only by a miracle of will, and sacrifice, that America built up a military force that could defeat the totalitarian threat. After World War II America no longer had a choice; faced with a nuclear threat too immediate and too powerful to ignore, we developed the policies and strategies intended to preserve the balance of power between NATO and the Warsaw Pact and we lived with the epic face-off of mutually assured destruction. If you destroy us, we destroy you, a frightening concept but in some ways a manageable one. The end of the Cold War brought an end to this strategy of containment and our nation was slow to identify the immediate threats to our national security interest. All that changed on 09/11. On that day America learned as Israel had learned long before that a critical threat to security in our own time is not only Nation States but threats from non-state actors employing asymmetrical warfare. From long painful experience, Israel knew that international terror networks operating across Borders independent of Nation States, though sometimes supported by them, unafraid of death, could not be deterred the way Nation States could. After 09/11, America put that lesson into action by going on offense. We sought to deny the Taliban and Al Qaeda safe havens in Afghanistan; in Iraq our fighting forces have achieved a stunning achievement in bringing Sunni tribal leaders together to deny Al Qaeda Iraqi sanctuary ; we decided not to ignore the terrorists in the hopes that they would simply go away but to defeat them on their own turf before they came to ours.

And we have had success; through an increased focus on intelligence, special operations, and homeland defense, many brave Americans have helped make sure that there hasn't been a single attack on US soil since 09/11. This shared commitment between the US and Israel to a tough permanent fight against terror is not limited to the shadows. It also involved the States that support terror including Iran. In recent testimony on Capitol Hill, General David Petraeus said without equivocation that Iran is now the greatest obstacle to stability in Iraq through its special groups. Iran backs Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza; Iranian President

Ahmadinejad recently invited camera crews on a tour of his uranium enrichment facility in Natanz--openly flouting the UN Security Council. Iran has violated no fewer than three binding Security Council Resolutions and according to the IAEA has likely drawn upon its military to support clandestine aspects of its nuclear program. This conclusion contrasts sharply with the most recent national intelligence estimate on Iran, which concluded that at a single point in time Iran had put an end to its nuclear weapons program.

Now some people like to think that Iran is not a serious threat. They waive away the very suggestion of it as a kind of hysteria. Yet when a country completely ignores the UN Security Council, funds, funds, arms and trains terrorists, claims to pursue nuclear technology for civilian use despite the fact that it sits atop of the third largest oil reserves on the planet and openly says it wants one of its neighbors wiped off the map it is nothing if not a serious threat.

Now this isn't saber-rattling; it's just common sense and those who disagree with it in my view don't have any common sense.

Now dealing with the Iranian threat will not be easy yet one thing is clear. The old tools of diplomacy are not sufficient in dealing with a nation like this. If Iran wants to be treated like a Nation State it needs to act like one by cutting its ties to murderous non-State actors. Until then the US and Israel must work together to contain the threat and our combined efforts to meet it will not only reflect the enduring relationship our two nations have historically enjoyed but also build a foundation for an even closer relationship based on mutual safety and security for the future. Israel's wisdom in relying on vigilance and strength as a basis for relations with its neighbors is shown in the grudging respect that many of these nations have been forced to pay it. Over the years Israel has been invaded repeatedly but its neighbors; in every case it has turned them back. Over time many of these former enemies such as Egypt, Jordan, and Qatar have become Israel's diplomatic partners. And as long as Israel continues to remain firm with its enemies there is reason to hope that others will as well.

While fanatical States like Iran may still exist, past success gives us reason to hope for a day when all Arab States will realize that Israel isn't going anywhere--that anti-Israel rhetoric will not solve its domestic problems and that making peace with the Jewish State is the best interest of its own people. Now for most of the last six decades AIPAC has kept policy makers in Washington well-informed about the concerns of the Israeli people and reminded Americans that the freedoms we've enjoyed in our own country are far more fragile than they seem and worth defending.

The first time spoke to AIPAC we were celebrating Israel's 40th birthday. Twenty years later --20 years later I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity to share in the celebration of yet another. David Ben Gurion said in Israel--*in order to be a realist you must believe in miracles*. On this 60th anniversary I comment Israel on the great miracle of its rebirth and extend all my best wishes for its future-- success and prosperity, always and ever in solidarity--in solidarity with a strong and prosperous United States. Thank you all very, very much.
[End Mitch McConnell-WO Time Codes]