

Senator Lindsey Graham at AIPAC Policy Conference 2010

Transcript

Thank you. That music sounds like "The Ten Commandments" — that's pretty cool. Well thank you Barry for a very kind introduction and back home I would say he laid it on pretty thick, so I've got a lot to live up to. Thanks for having me here tonight. This is the annual AIPAC dinner that begins on Monday and apparently is going to end on Tuesday, so I'll try to pick up the pace a little bit here.

But when Barry told me — Yeah, for those who need to go to the restroom, right? Well the more you drink, the better I sound. But when Barry told me that I was going to be the speaker and it was an all-Senate night, I knew it'd be long, but I was honored. How many people here are going to Capitol Hill tomorrow to lobby? Okay. If you think it doesn't matter, you're wrong. It matters. Go to your Senator or your Congressman — people you can vote for — and make your voice heard. The most effective way to lobby a Member of the Senate or the House is to show up and let them know that you live in their State or their District and you care. They will listen. It's not money; it's people that matters.

Now we've done this once before, but would every Member of Congress, would every Democrat, every Republican, stand just for five seconds. Stand. On behalf of every person standing, to our friends in Israel, to AIPAC: The Congress has your back! We will not let you down!

Republicans, Democrats, Joe Lieberman who's both a Republican and a Democrat and an Independent — we have your back!

If you want to know how wide and deep the support for Israel runs, I'm a Baptist Republican from South Carolina; the next speaker, is a Jewish senator from New York, Chuck Schumer — that's as wide as it gets. You can put the whole planet in the middle.

But we're here tonight to speak with one voice. And you don't have much of that going on in Washington now, do you? If you're watching television, you wonder if we've all lost our minds, and some days I wonder, too. So it's good to be here tonight to celebrate something that we all agree on, and that's our support for Israel. Tonight is a celebration. Tonight is not about healthcare; it's not about immigration. It's about our national security. It's about our best friend in the world, the State of Israel. It's about those things that unite us.

And I say that with no animosity to anyone else, any other group. I say that with no animosity to the Palestinian people. I share your hopes and dreams. All I ask is you recognize that Israel has a place on the planet.

Now some of you may have come here tonight because of a recent dust-up. I'm not going to get political and I'm not going to overly dwell on the recent conflict we've had. But let's say this, and let's say it loud and let's say it clear: friends disagree. That's part of being friends. They call it marriage. The one thing that will make a strong friendship and a good marriage is to disagree quietly, so that those who wish you ill, who do not have your common interest at heart, will not be empowered.

Ladies and gentlemen, Howard said it best: Jerusalem is not a settlement. No government in Israel will ever look at Jerusalem as a settlement! No government in the United States should ever look at Jerusalem as a settlement! It is the undivided capital of the State of Israel. It is the eternal home of the Jewish faith. And it is now time to move onto other issues.

I want to talk very quickly about the world as we wish it to be. As we celebrate tonight, let's embrace in our hearts the world that we all wish it to be, a world where there's no rockets from Gaza, no Hizballah attacks from the north, where Palestinian children go to school without being taught hate — that's the world we wish it to be.

An Iran controlled by its people, not some theocracy. An Iran governed by someone other than a Holocaust denier — that's the world we wish it to be. An Iran pursuing peaceful nuclear power, not a nuclear weapon. A world where

moderate Muslims are celebrated, not condemned and killed. An Afghanistan where a young girl never fears the soccer stadium, but can go to school and achieve her dreams. A free and independent Iraq where Sunnis, Shias, and Kurds can settle their differences at the ballot box and through the rule of law and be an inspiration to the Mideast. A UN, a United Nations that can actually control thugs and dictators. A United Nations that would never issue the Goldstone Report. That's the world as we wish it to be.

This is the world as it is, and if you don't know the difference, then the world is a dangerous place. I know the difference between the world as we wish it to be and the world as it is. The world as it is, is a divided Palestinian people, a place that allows rockets to be launched from apartment buildings, a place for a mosques are weapon storage sites, a place where school children are taught hate — that's the world as it is. Iran, a theocracy that kills its own children. Iran, a nation whose president questions whether or not the Holocaust actually existed — that's the world as it is, ladies and gentlemen.

I've got one simple idea. If you're a nation that wants to pursue nuclear power there should be an application, and if the president of that nation denies the existence of the Holocaust that should be the end of the application process.

The world as it is — Russia and China are AWOL when it comes to Iran. It's important to have a good relationship with Russia and China, but it's equally important that Russia and China help the world deal with the threat of a nuclear-armed Iran. That's the world as it is.

Ladies and gentlemen, here's the world as it must be. We must never allow anyone to drive a wedge between the State of Israel and the United States of America. It must be so. Israel's right to exist must be acknowledged by every group in every corner of the world. That's the way the world must be to move forward. We must not allow this Iranian theocracy to develop a nuclear weapon. It's not enough to be determined. We have to say without any hesitation: it will not happen.

All options must be on the table. You know exactly what I'm talking about. The question is — do the people we're talking to understand what I'm talking about? I've been in the military as a support person. I've never been a combat troop walking down the streets of Iraq and Afghanistan, but I've been in the theater. I know that war is a terrible thing. It takes the lives of people at the prime of their life, and when you talk about war you should never talk about it with a smile on your face. But I do know this: that sometimes it's better to go to war than it is to allow the Holocaust to develop a second time.

It is not lost upon me what would happen if military force had to be used against Iran. I hope and pray that is not the option that we have to seek. I hope and pray that other options will work. But as Barry indicated, time is not on our side. Here's the question for this group: Is this the last AIPAC meeting before Iran has a nuclear weapon? Fourteen months from now we meet again. I don't know the answer to that question, but I do know this: Time, ladies and gentlemen, is not on our side. It is not fair to put this ally of ours, the State of Israel, its prime minister and its government on both sides of the aisle, under the burden of having to deal with this issue alone. That's not good for the world; it's not good for Israel.

And I'm often asked, would a military strike as the last option be effective against the Iranian nuclear threat? My belief is a military strike stopping the Iranian government from having a nuclear weapon is more effective than trying to deal with the Iranian government after they have one.

And if military force is ever employed, it should be done in a decisive fashion. The Iranian government's ability to wage conventional warfare against its neighbors and our troops in the region should not exist. They should not have one plane that can fly or one ship that can float.

We have time, but time is not on our side. The UN Security Council has an opportunity to act; I hope and pray they do. Russia and China have a chance to change the course of history; I hope they will understand that a nuclear-armed Iran is just as much a threat to them as it is to us or Israel or any other tolerant person or group.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are consequential times. This is the time to show determination and resolve in the face of extremism. We are at war as a nation. September 11, 2001, everything changed about our country. We're almost nine years down the road and some of us I think have gotten too short of a memory. We're at war and we have to fight this war within our values. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the mastermind of 9/11 should not be in civilian court in New York City. If he is not an enemy combatant worthy of military commission trial, who would be? I think a lot of Democrats and Republicans believe that thought.

We are at war and we must win this war. We must see it through in Iraq and we must get it right in Afghanistan. President Barak Obama is my president. I am here to say tonight: I stand by him. I stood by him in Afghanistan. I will stand by him as he draws our troops down in Iraq in a responsible way. And if it ever becomes necessary to use military force or any other strong engagement tactic against Iran, I will stand by my president, and I ask you to stand by him. I ask you to pray for him. I have a lot of differences with President Obama, but can you imagine being president of the United States in these times? This man has a very hard job. We can have our fusses and we can have our fights, and this week on healthcare we're going to have a hell of a fight, but when it comes to national security, no Democrat in this room is my enemy. You're my opponent on the political battlefield, but you're my brother and you're my sister. We're all Americans.

I can promise you one thing: that the people we fight in far-away places with strange sounding names could really care less the political differences between Chuck Schumer and Lindsey Graham. They hate us both equally. Many of you may be that way. But our enemy doesn't distinguish between our political differences. They hate us because we will accept differences. They hate us because we will allow on the streets of South Carolina a mosque, a synagogue and a Baptist church — that we will stand up for each other.

They hate us more than they love life. Ladies and gentlemen, people asked Ronald Reagan, how does the Cold War end? He said: we win, they lose. How does the War on Terror end? We win, they lose. And when I say we, I mean moderate Muslims, who have been slaughtered by al-Qaeda and Islamic extremists. No group has suffered more than people in the Muslim world trying to be tolerant. By we, I mean Jews and gentiles, Buddhists, agnostics, vegetarians — you name it. I mean anybody that believes in tolerance and support for their fellow man.

One last thought. This is 2010, and we're wondering what to do with a country whose president denies the Holocaust. We do what we have to do to make sure there is no second Holocaust.

Ladies and gentlemen, we gather tonight with one simple message, and never let it be misunderstood by the enemies that we commonly face. Our message tonight to the world, to the people in Israel, to the young men and women serving overseas on our behalf — *never again*. God bless you; God bless the people of Israel; God bless the United States; God bless all those who believe in peace and tolerance.