

A Commitment to a Strong US – Israel Relationship



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Ever since the establishment of the state of Israel, the United States and Israel have shared a close bond that reinforces a longstanding, mutually beneficial relationship. Israel is America's strongest ally in the region. We must continue to strengthen this partnership, and in Congress, I plan to use my voice and vote to fortify this vital connection.

THE BURGEONING IRANIAN THREAT

Iran remains one of the most dangerous threats to Israel, to America and to our allies around the world. Iran's leaders speak openly of Israel's annihilation, and our only choice is to take them at their word. Therefore, America must never tolerate a nuclear weapon in Iran. A nuclear Iran would represent an existential threat to Israel, endanger security in the region and could lead to an arms race in an already insecure Middle East.

The United States must work with our allies to show the Iranian leadership that there are consequences for their decisions. Through multilateral sanctions at the UN and through a commitment of like-minded countries imposing crippling penalties on the Iranian regime, we must hold Iran accountable. Specifically, I will support efforts to limit petroleum exports to Iran, like the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act currently pending before Congress and will support measures that crack down on banks and companies that conduct business with Iran.

MAINTAINING AND STRENGTHENING OUR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

One of the most important ways that the United States can demonstrate its foreign policy and national security priorities is by reaffirming the U.S. commitment to a robust foreign aid package to Israel. Foreign aid represents less than one percent of our federal budget, but it has a positive impact far beyond its numbers, including in our local neighborhoods. Foreign aid helps create and save jobs for Floridians by promoting international trade with Israel. Last year, Florida businesses exported over \$500 million in goods to Israel, which means that the Florida-Israel relationship is an economic engine for our local community. The state of Florida has one of the largest Jewish populations in the world. It is imperative we use our natural relationship to further develop our economies together to create more jobs and substantive economic development.

Israel's ability to survive the daily threats of the region depends, in part, on the strength of its economy and its defense capabilities. I am fully committed to maintaining Israel's qualitative military edge and to working and coordinating with Israel on a host of issues, including research and development, science and technology, and homeland security.



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ISRAEL AND HER NEIGHBORS

I believe that the establishment of an independent, democratic Palestinian state existing alongside a Jewish state of Israel serves Israel's long-term security interests and reflects the hopes and aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians.

We cannot and should not impose a solution. Israel must not be pressured to take risks that its own political and security leaders do not feel are acceptable. Israel alone can determine how best to safeguard its citizens, as it did when it constructed the security barrier that has been so overwhelmingly successful in reducing terror strikes. In addition, Arab states have an important role to play in the political process. If Israel is going to take a great risk for peace, the United States must urge moderate Arab countries to take increased responsibility for the current situation and send Israel a signal of economic and diplomatic normalization.

Israel's security is non-negotiable. Unless Hamas and Hezbollah are willing to recognize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish State, renounce terrorism in word and deed by actively employing their intelligence assets to break up terrorist networks, and abide by all past agreements, the U.S. must not recognize these groups.

As recent history has shown, Israeli moves toward peace have not been reciprocated. The unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon in 1999 was followed by the scores of suicide bombings that defined the second intifada. Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 was followed by the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers and the 2006 Lebanon War. Furthermore, Hamas rockets from Gaza rained down on the civilians of Sderot and other neighborhoods, interrupting daily life, killing and maiming Israelis and leaving the children of Israel in trauma. I condemn the continuation of rocket activity out of Gaza, and I recognize that Israel must take necessary actions to protect her population. Last winter's defensive operations and the 2006 war with Hezbollah shows that Israel, like any sovereign government in the world, must defend its citizens and secure its borders.

THE HOLY CITY OF JERUSALEM

Jerusalem is the eternal capital of Israel, and I am strongly in favor of moving the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem to recognize this reality. Jerusalem is a holy space for three religions. I admire Israel's commitment to maintaining the ancient holy sites of Judaism, Islam and Christianity and providing access to people of all faith. Israel's dedication to this cause is truly worthy of emulation.

CONCLUSION

Israel's security must never be taken for granted. In Congress, I will be a vocal advocate of the American-Israel relationship, which is so crucial to our own safety and security at home.