

**AIPAC SPEECH 2013 – MINISTER OF
DEFENSE - EHUD BARAK**

- Thank you for such a warm welcome.
- What an **indescribable** feeling to be surrounded by so many **true friends** in the capital of the **world's greatest** democracy.
- **Members** of the **Administration, Members of Congress**, distinguished **ambassadors**, **especially our ambassador** Michael Oren....
Michael, Rosey, Bob, David, Howard and Richard, **AIPAC** members... older and young...
- Good evening to **you all**.
- It is **your** toil and **your** graft – **your** unwavering support – that keep **us** safe.
- I have **six humble** words for **all** of you: Thank you, thank you, thank you.
- I would like to **express** my **personal** appreciation to President **Obama** and Secretary **Panetta** for their **resolute** backing of Israel.

- **History** will **surely** record your **immeasurable** contribution to the **strength** of Israel, and the maintenance of the **truly** special relationship between our peoples.
- On **behalf** of the people of Israel, I wish **Secretary Hagel all the best** in his new role.
- As Secretary of Defense he will, no doubt, **serve his country** with the **same pride** and **honor** with which he served, both on the battlefield and in Congress.
- It is great to see **so many young** activists here. Thank you for your **energetic** commitment to Israel!
- A **commitment** which is so lucidly **dictated** by the **head...** yet so deeply **underpinned** by the **heart...**
- Keep it up – **you** are the future!

- It is thanks to the **rock solid** US-Israel **relationship**, alongside the **devotion** of the young **men and women** of the IDF, that **our capacity to defend ourselves**, has been **guaranteed** for years to come!
- With **US** support, combined with the **ingenuity** of our scientists; Israel finds itself at the **cutting edge** of **missile defense** technology.
- The '**Iron Dome**' recently **intercepted** over 400 incoming terrorist rockets. Practically – this is like hitting a bullet... with a bullet!
- Just last week, **we** – the US **and** Israel – conducted a successful **exo**-atmospheric test of the Arrow 3 interceptor.
- The State of Israel simply would not be **the strong island of stability** it is, without one crucial **constant**.
- **You!** The **United States of America**. Its **people**. Its **leadership**. Its **Congress**. Its **Jewish community**.

- It is **no** secret, and I'll repeat it again, that we live in a **tough** neighborhood, **where** there is **no** **mercy for the weak**. **And no second chance** for those **who cannot** defend themselves.
- Israel is the **strongest** country in the region **and** the **only genuinely open democracy**.
- An **unprecedented geopolitical earthquake** in the last three years has **shattered** the generations' old regional order.
- There are **two** clear **lessons** and one **insight** which I have drawn from this period:
- **# 1: Be modest with predictions..... especially** about **the future!** Take Egypt as an example; **Mubarak** was **unable** to predict it... who **did?** Who thinks he **could?**
- **#2:** When friends tell me: **Don't worry...** If worse comes to worst ... the world **will step forward and act!**

- My answer is: **Do not** take this for granted.
- Look at **Syria** – you don't need classified intelligence; it's on **your screens**. Assad's jet fighters, tanks and artillery are **slaughtering** his own citizens. Over 70,000 Syrians killed.
- Yet **still...** there is **no** sense of direction and **no** political will to act.
- **There is an extremely** relevant lesson here... **especially** for all of us in **Israel**.
- And an **insight...**
- Many believe that the **root** cause for **all** the problems in the Middle East... is our **inability** to solve the conflict with the Palestinians.
- Well, I say... **That's not true!**
- Recent developments in the Middle East have been **far beyond** our control... and **independent** of our deeds.
- **Even if** a peace agreement with the Palestinians had been **signed** and **sealed** a long time ago:

- The Muslim Brotherhood would **still** have come to power in Egypt
 - Syria would **still** be mired in a bloody civil war
 - And Iran would **still** be pursuing nuclear capabilities and a hegemonic role in the Gulf
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- And ladies and gentlemen,
 - It is **Iran's pursuit** of nuclear capabilities which is **the greatest** challenge facing **Israel**, the **region** and the **world** today...
 - A **nuclear** Iran spells the end of **any** conceivable non-proliferation regime.
 - **Saudi Arabia, Turkey** and later **Egypt** will follow suit. In the future, even terrorist groups may try.
 - Diplomatic efforts continue. Sanctions are **unprecedented and hurting**, but frankly – while exhausting all diplomatic means is **understandable** – I do **not** believe it will lead to

a “moment of truth”, where the Ayatollahs will **give up** their nuclear aspirations.

- Therefore, **all options must remain** on the table.
- We have stated this **time and again**.
- And we expect **all those** who say it... to **mean** it...
- Ladies and gentlemen... **We mean it**.
- And let me repeat it: **we... mean it**.

- A nuclear Iran is the **most** imminent and acute danger to the stability of the **entire region**. But it is **not** the only one:
- Radical Islamist **terror** is spreading rapidly.
- **And** the accumulation of **missiles** and **rockets** will **necessitate** regional **missile defense**.
- So **what** is to be **done**?
- It is an interregnum right now in Israel, and the **new** Netanyahu government will have to shape **its** approach.
- But allow me, just before I leave my post, to **share** with you **my** positions:
- The Middle East is a **Gestalt** – **everything depends** on **everything else**.
- Facing this array **of threats**, we have to:
- **Firstly**, start building a '**Regional Security Framework**'...

- This should be built around the **common** challenges of **radical Islamist terror, border security, missile defense...** and of course, **Iran**.
- And being led by the **United States**, it could provide a **variety of synergies** for **all** its regional participants.
- **Secondly**, we need a **daring peace initiative** vis-à-vis the Palestinians.
- A **two-state** solution is the **only viable long-term solution**.
- It is a **compelling imperative** for us, in order to secure **our identity** and **our future** as a **Jewish** and **democratic** state; it's **not** a **favor** for the Palestinians...
- Believe **me**, I tried hard as Prime Minister, together with President Clinton. So I **know**, from **personal experience**, that the Palestinians are not **easy** partners for peace.
- Prime Minister Netanyahu has taken **courageous steps**, to **renew** the process **including** an **unprecedented** settlement freeze.

- But **still** – from the **Palestinian** side... **no** proper response.
- They clearly bear **most** of the responsibility for past failures.
- And I know, a fully fledged agreement is **probably** not feasible today, But **if this** is the case – and only a **sincere effort** can **determine** this – we have to **try** and achieve a **reasonable, fair, interim agreement**.
- I strongly **believe** this is possible, while **guaranteeing** all our security and vital interests.
- But **if even an interim agreement** is unobtainable, then we should consider **unilateral steps**, in order to place a **wedge** on this **extremely** dangerous **slippery slope** towards a **binational** state.
- It involves **demarcating** a line **within** the land of Israel... Within which we will have the **settlement blocs** and a **solid Jewish majority** for generations to come.

- **As well as** setting **security arrangements**, and a solid Israeli, long-term **military presence** along the River Jordan.
- **Rest assured...** our **security** should not – and **will not** – be compromised under **any** of these alternatives.
- Tough decisions **must** be taken; but **it is** possible.
- And as our sages teach us: *“If not now... when?”*
- **I strongly** believe that this intertwined **strategic triangle**:
- **First**, The **Regional Security Framework**
- **Second**, a reinvigorated **political process** with the Palestinians...
- And **third**: tackling **Iran**.
- This **triangle**, is the **most effective** approach to deal with the **challenges** on our horizon.

- **Israel**, has **also** been experiencing its own tremors of **change**.
- In the summer of 2011, the people of Israel **took to the streets**... demanding a more equal allocation of the burden.
- Just last month, **53** new, fresh members of the Knesset **were sworn in**, about **half** the serving members of Knesset ... (Present company included!)... **were out**.
- **That** is what I call **democracy in action**.
- A democracy **I am** proud of.
- A democracy **you** can be proud of.
- I am **confident** that Prime Minister Netanyahu will **lead** his **new** government with the **same dedication** and **responsibility** which he led the **last**.

- Ladies and gentlemen,

- I was born 71 years ago, at the height of World War II; the Nazi crematoria in Europe were working **day** and **night**.
- And **now...** in **2013**, I am ending my tenure as the Minister of Defense of a **strong, independent Jewish state**.
- **Look** at what we – **as a nation** – have achieved... **Who** would have believed it then?
 - Today we have an **agile** and **adaptive** high-tech and **export oriented** economy.
 - A **start-up** culture flourishes on an **eruption** of talent and an underlying **entrepreneurial** spirit.
- I am **optimistic**, and my **vision** for Israel is **clear**:
- A **strong**, self-confident, thriving **Jewish, democratic** state, living in **peace** and **security** with its **neighbors**.
- An **exemplary state** and **world leader** in science, technology, education and culture.

- A country in which **our** children will **want** to live, and **your** children will be **proud of**.

- Ladies and gentlemen,

- We are at a **decisive juncture in our history...**

- As President Kennedy noted during the Cuban Missile Crisis:
 - "The **path** we have **chosen** for the **present** is full of **hazards**, as **all paths are**. But it is the **one most** consistent with our **character** and **courage** as a nation..."

- I believe **we possess** the **character** and **courage** **as a nation** to make those **tough** decisions for the **future, peace** and **security** of the **State of Israel**.

- Please **allow** me to end with the millennia old blessing:
 - השם עוז לעמו ייתן, השם יברך את עמו בשלום

- May the Lord bestow his people with **courage**; may the Lord bless his people with **peace**.

- Thank you...