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ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO DEFEND ITSELF: IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL SECURITY AND U.S. INTERESTS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO DEFEND ITSELF: IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL SECURITY AND U.S. INTERESTS

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2012

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 11 o'clock a.m., in room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. The committee will come to order. I'm sorry to Mr. Berman and his side of the aisle, I know that the Democrats are caucusing as we speak. We tried to find a convenient time but everybody's caucusing all day, a lot of caucusing.

After recognizing myself and my friend, the ranking member, for 7 minutes each for our opening statements, I will recognize for 3 minutes, the chairman and the ranking member of the subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia for their opening remarks. I will then recognize other members seeking recognition, for 1 minute. We will then hear from our witnesses, and without objection, the witness' prepared statements will be made part of the record and members may have 5 days to insert statements and questions for the record subject to the length limitation in the rules.

The Chair now recognizes herself for 7 minutes.

Two weeks ago, the Middle East again erupted, and Israel was forced to defend herself against the persistent and ongoing barrage of rocket attacks by Hamas and other Palestinian extremists. Israel's successful military operation, Pillar of Defense, eliminated Hamas' top leaders and disabled several rocket launch sites depleting Hamas' operational capabilities. This is not just about specific actions by Hamas in Gaza, but about a Palestinian Authority that does nothing to reign in Hamas and other Palestinian extremist groups, and allows intolerance and incitement to violence against the Jewish State to fester.

There have been public reports indicating that the Palestinian Authority has continued to pay the salaries of both Palestinian extremists in Israeli prisons, and pledged to pay for Hamas' salaries if they were to enter into a power-sharing agreement with the PA. And today, as we know, Palestinian leader Abbas plans to exacerbate the problem by presenting his bid for a non-state membership at the United Nations instead of initiating direct talks with Israel in order to bring long lasting peace to the region.

What will the day after the vote look like? There must be consequences for Ramallah's rejectionism and continued irresponsibility.

The constant sound of sirens as rockets from Palestinian extremists head toward Israeli towns and cities is a sobering reminder of the imminent threats facing the Jewish State. Israel is surrounded by rogue regimes and terrorist organizations that wish to wipe her off the map. Fortunately, the United States and Israel have collaborated in developing the Iron Dome anti-missile system which saved so many lives during the recent attacks. I would be interested in hearing from our witnesses, their thoughts on if and how this successful model can be replicated with other critical regional allies such as Jordan for future cooperative activities.

We face serious challenges region-wide, from Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons capabilities, to the ongoing violence in Syria, to transitions region-wide. The central questions I hope our witnesses will address in their testimony, what now? Where do we go from here?

Hamas has a lot of weapons left in its arsenal and intends to rearm, with Iran providing weapons to be smuggled through the Sinai. The Egyptian Government has yet to crack down on arms smuggling through the Sinai or crackdown on the use of Sinai as a sanctuary for violent Palestinian extremist groups to launch rockets at Israel. Yet, the administration seemed to go out of its way to praise the Morsi government for making the ceasefire agreement happen. According to news reports, administration officials indicated off the record that President Obama was investing heavily in Morsi and views him as someone with whom the U.S. could do business. Of course then Morsi immediately engaged in a massive domestic power grab, claiming virtually unlimited powers.

What steps should the Congress take to hold the Morsi government accountable for its actions? What further conditions should be placed on U.S. political, economic and military support to Egypt? For example, 1 month after our Embassy in Cairo was attacked, without any adequate protection from Egyptian authorities, the Obama administration requested a transfer of $450 million in cash assistance to Egypt. This was met by strong Congressional opposition, but what more can we do?

Earlier this year, the Obama administration decided to send economic aid to the Palestinians over Congressional objections. This included the use of taxpayer funds for such dubious projects as cash for work in Gaza, scholarship for Palestinian students, office refurbishments, and improvements to the PA agencies and ministries.

In the last 3 years alone, the United States has provided over $2 billion in U.S. assistance to the Palestinians. Yet this did not serve as an inducement for the Palestinians to act responsibly, to effectively fight extremism, to pursue sustained unconditional direct negotiations with the Israelis, or to abandon their unilateral statehood scheme at the U.N. At a time when our own economic situation is in dire straits, should the U.S. be helping the Palestinians rebuild their economy and providing them with millions in hard-earned U.S. taxpayer dollars while Palestinian extremists embrace violence and undermine the peace process?

Finally, we cannot forget the existential threat that a nuclear Iran poses to Israel, U.S. allies and national security interests in the region. I am deeply concerned that the administration's foolish embrace of yet another round of negotiations will only embolden the Iranian regime. Rather than embarking on this dangerous and foolhardy course, we must accelerate and expand our sanctions and work with likeminded allies to strengthen their bilateral sanctions regimes, to compel the Iranians to verifiably and permanently abandon their dangerous policies.

As events unfold, we must closely analyze our foreign policy objectives in the region and scrutinize every taxpayer dollar being spent in this fragile economic environment to ensure that we are able to regain lost leverage and effectively pursue our national security objectives.

And with that I am pleased to yield to my friend, the ranking member, Mr. Berman, for his opening statement.

Mr. BERMAN. Well, thank you very much, Madam Chairman, and also thank you for calling this important hearing at this critical time. I would like to offer a few observations regarding the recent fighting and regarding the Palestinians' profoundly regrettable effort to achieve statehood recognition through a U.N. vote rather than through direct negotiations with its neighbor Israel.

First of all, regarding the fighting let's be clear. Contrary to media shorthand, the hostilities began long before Israel killed Ahmad Jabari, the leader of Hamas' military wing. Hamas and other Gaza extremists fired more than 800 rockets into Israel this year prior to Jabari's death. During some of these barrages, 1 million people in southern Israel, one-eighth of Israel's total population, the equivalent of 40 million Americans, were forced into bomb shelters, paralyzing the region. No country in the world would sit by and allow itself to be attacked in this way, especially when targeted by terrorists who oppose its very existence.

Second, amidst the recent visits of Arab and Turkish officials to Gaza, let's remember why we have to stand steadfastly against any legitimization of the de facto Gaza authority. Hamas is an Iranian-backed terrorist group that is sworn to Israel's destruction. They are not remotely a peace partner. There should be no loosening of the Quartet's conditions for dealing with Hamas, nor should we loosen ours.

In that regard, I can't help but note once again Hamas' astonishing cruelty and disregard for human life, not only Jewish life but Palestinian life. They show their contempt for Palestinian civilians by burying their rockets next to hospitals and mosques and in crowded neighborhoods, creating a cynically crafted quandary for Israel, which is caught between the sacred mission of protecting its own citizens and the terrible prospect that some innocents may die as it does so. And we know that Hamas is never more pleased than when it can accuse Israel of a civilian massacre.

Israel's own constantly improving efforts to limit loss of innocent life stands in stark contrast to Hamas' cruelty. As we know, Israel has saved countless lives by warning Palestinian civilians to evacuate before striking targets. Every loss of innocent human life is a tragedy, but Israel deserves credit for keeping civilian casualties

remarkably low while attacking nearly 1,500 Hamas targets in densely populated Gaza.

Third, the Obama administration deserves commendation for its support of Israel, steadfast support from the outset and throughout this crisis. President Obama made clear that he was in his words, "fully supportive of Israel's right to defend itself from missiles landing on people's homes and workplaces." And he emphasized that his administration would, and I quote again, "continue to support Israel's right to defend itself." Administration spokesman also repeatedly made clear that Israel would "make their own decisions about the tactics they use," and they pledged additional support for Iron Dome and stepped-up efforts to stop Hamas' smuggling. And once it became clear that Israel wanted a cease-fire the administration helped seal that deal as well.

Fourth, Prime Minister Netanyahu deserves credit for his restraint. By choosing not to go forward with a ground operation he saved countless Israeli and Palestinian lives.

And I think this body can be justifiably proud of its own role in saving innocent lives through our funding of the Iron Dome defense system. Israeli lives were saved and the tenor of hostilities dramatically altered by Iron Dome's amazing ability to destroy nearly 90 percent of rockets before they landed in populated areas. Palestinian lives were saved because Iron Dome prevented the kind of atrocities that would have left Israel no choice but to respond more harshly.

And fifth, as we look in the future, nothing will be more critical to calming Israel's Gaza border than ending the smuggling of arms from Iran and elsewhere into Gaza. In that regard, Egypt bears a particularly heavy responsibility.

Lastly, a word about what's happening at the U.N. today and its context. President Abbas, the leader of the PLO and of the Palestinian Authority, is seeking U.N. General Assembly support for recognition of Palestine as a so-called "non-member state." Whatever the vote on that proposition, the whole world knows that Palestine isn't yet a state, that it has virtually none of the attributes of statehood enumerated in international law.

We will watch closely to see what the PLO does in the aftermath of this vote. If they continue to internationalize their claims, for example, through cases at the International Criminal Court or the International Court of Justice, or if Abbas continues to refuse to return unconditionally to the negotiating table, I have no doubt that the impact on U.S.-Palestinian relations will be devastating.

Thank you, Madam Chairman, for holding this hearing, and I look forward to hearing from our distinguished panel.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Berman. I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to Mr. Chabot, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Middle East and South Asia.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Madam Chair. I know we want to get to our distinguished panel of witnesses this morning so I will try to be brief.

In the last week we have heard a lot of references to truce between Hamas and the state of Israel. Unfortunately using that term is, I am afraid, wishful thinking. Hamas is a terrorist organization. Terrorism is what it does. And any lull in that terrorist ac-

tivity will only be a time-out in which it rebuilds, re-arms and reorganizes. Its goal is and always has been the destruction of Israel and the extermination of the Jewish people.

And I think that anybody who thinks that the truce negotiated last week is anything more than an intermission in that battle ought to step back and take a look at Hamas' history in Gaza. It is fraught with violence directed at both Israel and at its Palestinian counterparts associated with Fatah.

In the 7 years since Israel withdrew from Gaza, it has launched thousands of missiles including hundreds in the months before Israel finally took military action to protect itself. And now as a result of the so-called truce agreed upon last week we will hopefully have a period of relative calm in the region. But the length of that calm will depend on the actions of the key players in the region, especially Egypt which has been credited by the Obama administration with being the key player for negotiating the cease-fire.

Will the Morsi administration follow through with its role as peacemaker, or will it appease its radical Muslim Brotherhood base and look the other way while arms continue to be smuggled into Gaza to the Muslim Brotherhood's Hamas offshoot for the sole purpose of attacking Israel? I am afraid it is more likely to be the latter.

We have got an excellent panel of witnesses, as I said before, here this morning, and I think we all look forward to hearing them address these important issues.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for holding this hearing.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Chabot.

I will now recognize members to speak for 1 minute. Mr. Sherman, the ranking member on the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade.

Mr. SHERMAN. Fifteen hundred rockets and mortars entered Israel aimed at apartment buildings, schools and hospitals. The facts are uncontested that they were aimed almost exclusively at civilian target, 1,500 separate war crimes. Egypt has basically a 10-mile border with Gaz. It allows those tunnels to operate and take the rockets in. If we are going to praise Egypt for helping to end this barrage of missiles against Israel, we must also condemn Egypt for allowing those rockets to be smuggled through their territory.

Palestinians asked Israel to withdraw from Gaza, Israel did, now the leaders of Gaza demand the "liberation of Tel Aviv." This effort to delegitimize Israel and to delegitimize Israel's right to defend itself needs to be turned back. This hearing is one small part of that. And finally, I should commend the President for his steadfast support for Israel's right to defend itself.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Sherman.

I am honored to recognize Mr. Smith, the chairman on the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, Hamas was not holding its own in this conflict despite its obnoxious use of terror missiles aimed at civilians reminiscent of the Nazi's V1 and V2 rocket attacks on Londoners during World War II. Israel's Iron Dome anti-missile system is reported to have been 85 percent suc-

cessful in engaging those missiles headed for population areas of up to 70 kilometers from their launch sites.

A ground war launched by Israel could have further degraded the ability of Hamas and other Palestinian groups that threaten Israel with continuing missile attacks by enabling further Israeli strikes on the Palestinian missile storage facilities. So the Hamas concession to temporary peace can in no way be construed as a commitment to lasting peace, but rather a realization of the danger of defeat. Paradoxically, the truce actually offers Hamas an opportunity to restock and reposition their missiles.

Madam Chair, I would ask that my full statement be made a part of the record.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Without objection.

Mr. SMITH. And I am testifying on behalf of Hurricane Sandy victims over on the Senate side at 11:30, so I will go and hopefully be back.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Lovely, thank you.

Mr. SMITH. And I thank our distinguished witnesses for their work.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Smith.

Mr. Rohrabacher who is the chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations is recognized.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you, Madam Chairman, and I am looking forward to hearing the testimony today. Let me just state that it shouldn't escape any of us that the Middle East is in turmoil and we need to compare this to what it was like 6 years ago before this administration. And it seems to me that the policies and the approach that brought by this administration to the Middle East have left us with turmoil and less of a chance for peace, and the launching of more and more rockets into Israel by Palestinian irreconcilables as well as the Iranian Mullah regime deciding that they can provide more and more rockets to the Palestinian irreconcilables. If anybody is responsible, who is responsible for all of this? All we know is our enemies seem to be of encouraged by the current policy of this administration because they are now more aggressive than they were 6 years ago.

We all remember the apology tour. We all remember the lack of support for America's friends. We all remember the fact that this administration didn't say a word to help the students in Iran when they were about to stand up against the Mullah regime. We are now facing the consequences not of a proof of sincerity which this administration——

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Sorry, Mr. Rohrabacher.

Mr. ROHRABACHER [continuing]. But a projection of weakness by the Obama administration.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Royce is recognized, the chair of the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you, Madam Chair. I was actually in Haifa in 2006 during the rocket attacks during the Hezbollah war and actually saw the targeting of civilian population sites there, and at one point even the trauma hospital that I visited. And so I saw what

it was like to see a society paralyzed. It was a ghost town there. Out of that, however, came the Iron Dome. And in a few short years, from the drawing board to implementation, we had a system there that proved its mettle and protected Israelis from rocket attack.

I think that that Iron Dome gave leaders in Israel breathing room. It prevented more bloodshed. I think Congress should be very proud of the role it played in the Iron Dome. I will tell you that I am very skeptical about Egyptian commitments that were made here and I am skeptical about them being upheld. And with Iran's backing, the Islamic resistance movement will re-arm. Iran is getting and generating more and more weaponry down there, and that is without a nuclear weapon. Imagine how emboldened Iran will be with a bomb. So the stakes are very high, Madam Chair, and I appreciate you holding this hearing.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Royce.

Mr. Wilson of South Carolina is recognized.

Mr. WILSON OF SOUTH CAROLINA. Thank you, Madam Chair.

On Saturday, the Post and Courier of Charleston, South Carolina, published a thoughtful editorial in response to the Associated Press article that deemed Israel a winner in the cease-fire agreement and it stated, "After all, given its brutal, duplicitous track record, Hamas can't be realistically trusted to keep its word about anything, especially when offering assurances it will stop firing rockets into Israel."

Sadly, due to shameless propaganda, Israel is often misrepresented when it responds to attacks. We must not forget that Hamas fires missiles and rockets first, and Israel has every right to defend itself. In fact, it is Hamas who intentionally targets civilians with its indiscriminate rocket attacks. Hamas also has rockets provided by Iran, a nation that is fueled by hatred of Israel, who dwells on reminding the world it can provoke war in the Middle East. I am grateful America stands by Israel, and I yield the balance of my time.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much.

Mr. Poe, the vice chair of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, is recognized.

Mr. POE. The eyes of the world were on the Gaza Strip for 8 days as sirens wailed and rockets rained down on our ally, Israel. It started when Hamas launched over 8,000 rockets into Israel since 2005. These rockets didn't come from nowhere. For months, Iran's mullahs shipped long-range rockets into the Sudan, shipped them through Egypt before smuggling them through tunnels and assembling them in Gaza.

Israel responded by doing what any other responsible nation would do, it defended itself. Now that the cease-fire is in place, the United States needs to show that there are consequences for attacking a sovereign nation both for Hamas, but especially for Iran. We should have stricter enforcement sanctions and pass tougher sanctions on Iran. Iran and Hamas both should be held accountable for these attacks. Israel has the moral right and legal duty to defend itself. There is a cease-fire but only until Hamas obtains more Iranian missiles. Hamas is the puppet but Iran is the puppeteer, and we should recognize that. I yield back.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. It is just the way it is.

Mr. Kelly, Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, vice chair, is recognized.

Mr. KELLY. Thank you, Madam Chair. I had the opportunity actually to sit in front of Prime Minister Netanyahu, and when we talked about Israel's role in that region of the world he said, understand this, that in that region we are you and you are us. I don't think anything could be more clear than that. And as we go into this hearing today, I think it is really important that we understand, you can talk the talk but you better be able to walk the walk. And we need to send a message not just to Israel's current enemies, but as the world goes on and continues to spin out of control, especially that region, that we stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Israel and we will never back down on any commitment to make sure that we protect our closest ally and friend in that region of the world.

So Madam Chair, thank you for having this, and the witnesses, thank you for being here. We have some other questions when it comes to the U.N. Arms Trade Treaty and Palestine's end run now to get some legitimacy. I think those are things that we have to meet head on and be very clear in our language about it and not put some kind of a spin on it that lets people interpret it as something different than what it is, and that is our total commitment to Israel and its survival.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Kelly.

Congressman Turner of New York is recognized.

Mr. TURNER. Thank you, Madam Chair. I am interested in what our distinguished panel can tell us about what may happen in the U.N. vote. What mischief may be caused if the Palestinians prevail, and what the United States is doing about it and what we should be doing about it, and a long-term basis, do you see any role of Egypt here in absorbing some responsibility in Gaza from a protectorate to whatever? But your views would be appreciated. Thank you, I yield back, Madam Chair.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Turner.

Mr. Burton, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe and Eurasia, is recognized.

Mr. BURTON. It is great to see my old buddy, Elliott Abrams, again. We have known each other for 30 years, but you never age. You still look young like—let me, I am not going to say much right now. I will listen to the witnesses.

But ever since the Arab Spring began, the entire northern tier of Africa and the Gulf States have been in a state of flux, and I think that is one of the contributing factors. Iran is trying to destabilize that entire region, and Israel is the one that is bearing the brunt of it. And all I can say is that we need to give Israel all the support they need to make sure that they survive, because Iran is determined with its allies to destroy it.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Duncan of South Carolina is recognized.

Mr. DUNCAN. Thank you, Madam Chairman. In August 2011, I was in Israel and we heard a presentation by a lady from southern Israel. She lived on a collective farm, a kibbutz, and she came and she talked with us about how they teach their children about Code

Red, the threat that they have every day. Coloring books about the color red, board games like Chutes and Ladders where if you land on Code Red you go to the bomb shelter. She presented to us a box of both rocket and bomb fragments, her collection that she had picked up on the yard of her home.

I don't have a bomb or rocket fragment collection, and I would be willing to bet not anyone in this room does. This is an existential threat that Israel lives under every day. They should have the right to defend themselves. And with that Madame Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you. Thank you so much.

Mr. Bilirakis, my colleague from Florida.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate it very much, and thank you for holding this hearing.

For years, Israelis have lived under the constant threat of attack from Gaza using rockets, many of which were supplied from Iran and smuggled into the country. A few weeks ago we saw Israel exercise its right to defend itself. The cease-fire which began November 21st appears to be holding for now, but we know Iran will continue in its efforts to arm Hamas.

Iran has also been active in Syria. Tens of thousands of Syrians have been killed and many more have become refugees in neighboring Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. The future of Syria is uncertain but the conflict brings increased security concerns for Israel and the region at large. I look forward to asking questions. I look forward to your testimony. Thank you, I appreciate it.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much. Thank you.

And we are honored to have as our guest, Mr. Green of Texas. I understand you don't have an opening statement, or you wanted to ask a question. I wanted to make sure that you had a minute if you wanted to say something. Mr. Green?

Mr. GREEN. Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank you especially for allowing me the opportunity to be heard. I think it goes without saying that any nation that is under assault has the right to defend itself. I am eager to hear what our panelists have to say so as to get a better understanding of some of the nuances that I may not have captured from viewing this from afar. I thank you again.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, sir. We are honored to have you.

And now it is my pleasure to introduce our excellent set of panelists starting with Elliott Abrams who as Mr. Burton points out is a good friend of our committee for many years. He is a senior fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. After serving on the staffs of Senator "Scoop" Jackson and Moynihan, he was an assistant Secretary of State in the Reagan administration and received the Secretary of State's Distinguished Service Award from Secretary George P. Shultz.

Mr. Abrams joined the Bush administration in January 2001, as a special assistant to the President and senior director of the NSC for Democracy, Human Rights, and International Organizations. From December 2002 to February 2005, he served as the special assistant to the President and senior director of the National Security Council for Near East and North African Affairs. He served as

deputy assistant to the President and deputy national security advisor for Global Democracy Strategy from February 2005 to January 2009, and in that capacity supervised both the Near East and the North African Affairs and the Democracy, Human Rights, and International Organizations directorates of the National Security Council. Wow.

And then we will hear from Danielle Pletka who is the vice president for Foreign and Defense Policy Studies at AEI. Before joining this organization she served 10 years as a senior professional staff member for the Near East and South Asia on the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Ms. Pletka writes regularly on the Middle East and South Asia, U.S. national security, terrorism and weapons proliferation, and for a range of American newspapers and magazines. Ms. Pletka's writings and interviews have appeared in the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal, CNN, CBS News, the Los Angeles Times and many others. She has testified before Congress on the Iranian threat and other terrorist activities in the Middle East, and she has also written extensively on deterring a nuclear Iran and Iran's influence in the Middle East. Welcome to you as well.

And next we will hear from Robert Satloff who has served as the executive director of the Washington Institute since '93. Dr. Satloff is an expert on Arab and Islamic politics as well as U.S.-Middle East policy. He has written and spoken widely on the Arab-Israeli peace process, the Islamist challenge to the growth of democracy to the region, and the need for bold and innovative public diplomacy to Arabs and Muslims. The author or editor of nine books or monographs, Dr. Satloff's views on the Middle East issues frequently appear in major newspapers and he regularly comments on major news programs, talk shows and National Public Radio. Dr. Satloff is the creator and host of a weekly news and interview program on Alhurra, the U.S. Government supported Arabic satellite television channel that is broadcast in the Middle East and Europe.

A distinguished panel, indeed, and thank you, Dr. Satloff, for giving me your latest edition from the Washington Institute. Thank you so much, and we will begin with Mr. Abrams. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ELLIOTT ABRAMS, SENIOR FELLOW FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. ABRAMS. Thank you very much. I should start by saying it has been a great pleasure over the last few years to come and testify before the committee and see this tag team of the chairman and ranking member, and all things change but I have been honored and very pleased to be able to testify before you.

I want to just say a word first about the Gaza war at the local level and then the broader, regional level. At the local level it is obviously the successor to what happened in December 2008 and January 2009, Cast Lead. Then as now, Hamas and other terrorist organizations shot hundreds of mortars and rockets into Israel, and then as now, it was only a matter of time before Israel reacted. Throughout 2008 Israeli officials were telling the Bush White House, if this continues we are going to have to go into Gaza.

Why did Hamas do this now, I think, is an interesting question, now, because it obviously forced Israel to react. We don't really know the answer but I can give you three theories. The first is that with this U.N. initiative, the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank was kind of taking center stage and Hamas wanted to grab it back for the armed struggle. The second is that if Hamas isn't fighting, isn't launching rockets, some of the young men under its control start leaving and going to places like Islamic Jihad. They didn't sign up to police the borders, they signed up to attack Israel, and if Hamas isn't doing it others are. They are going to lose some popularity in the places they need it.

Thirdly, and I think as Mr. Chabot has said this, why does Hamas commit acts of terrorism? It commits acts of terrorism because it is a terrorist group. They are terrorists. That is what they do. They didn't conquer Gaza so that they could improve the quality of the schools and have more efficient government services. They conquered Gaza to use as a base to attack Israel. Now whether they benefit from this war, I think, depends in no small part on Egypt, as many of you have said.

We tried, when Israel left Gaza in 2005, to work out a border regime that would prevent Iranian arms from going in. We failed. Israel and Egypt tried again in January 2009, and we in the United States tried. And we got all sorts of promises, but we failed. Egypt can do this, and it is in Egypt's interest as well as ours and Israel's that it do so. So I urge you, as you consider this question of aid to Egypt, to think hard about this issue.

It is also clear as several of you have said that those missiles, particularly the Fajr missiles that hit or were aimed at Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, weren't made in workshops in Gaza. They came from Iran. And it is a reminder that this kind of subversion, aggression, military action is coming from the Iran that doesn't have nuclear weapons as has been said here. One can only assume that with nuclear weapons they will be far more militant, far more aggressive throughout the entire region.

I wanted to just mention two other things before I end. One of them on Egypt, one on Jordan which, Madam Chairman, you mentioned. On Egypt, we made a mistake, I believe, for most of the last 30 years under Hosni Mubarak of not caring very much about what went on inside as long as the foreign policy was responsible. I urge that we don't make that mistake again. That we do not take the position that, well, President Morsi did okay during the Gaza war so who cares whether there is democracy in Egypt or not? This would be, I think, a tremendous mistake for the United States.

Finally, on Jordan. We have seen in the last few months demonstrations of increasing size. Why now? Why 2012 and not previous years? One of the key reasons, I think, is economic. Jordan is suffering under the burden of Syrian refugees, approximately 200,000 of them, and increased energy prices, because that gas pipeline that used to go from Egypt to Israel and Jordan has been closed, so they are now buying on the spot market and they are paying a lot more. If we seek stability in Jordan we should help it address these issues.

We are generous as an aid donor, you vote this aid. The Gulf Arabs have not been so generous, not this year. They have given

next to nothing. And I think this should be a key goal of the United States policy in that region, to ask them to act and act fast to help Jordan remain stable and survive this very difficult year.

The time is up so I will stop with that, and thank you again for inviting me. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Abrams follows:]

COUNCIL *on* FOREIGN RELATIONS

November 29, 2012

Israel's Right to Defend Itself: Implications on Regional Security and U.S. Interests

Prepared statement by
Elliott Abrams
Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies
Council on Foreign Relations

Before the
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
United States House of Representatives
2nd Session, 112th Congress

Hearing on "Israel's Right to Defend Itself: Implications on Regional Security and U.S. Interests"

Madam Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to appear again before the Committee.

The recent conflict in Gaza should lead us to review developments in the region and their impact on U.S. interests. I am grateful that the Committee is undertaking this task.
I would suggest that we assess the Gaza war at two levels: the local or Israeli-Palestinian level, and the broader regional level that includes Iran.

At the local level, this conflict is a successor to the war of December 2008 and January 2009, known in Israel as "Operation Cast Lead." Then as now, Hamas and other Gaza terrorist organizations shot hundreds of mortars, missiles, and rockets into Israel. No government can accept such aggression and every government must protect its population, so it was only a matter of time before Israel acted. I recall that throughout 2008, when I was an official of the National Security Council, Israeli officials warned us that unless the fire from Gaza stopped it would be necessary for Israel to act. That war led Hamas to cut the number of firings

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greatly in 2009, 2010, and 2011, but the number grew again this past year. The weekend of November 10-12 saw over 100 missiles, rockets, and mortars fired into Israel, so an Israeli response was inevitable.

Why did Hamas do this? Why did it in essence seek to force such an Israeli move? The answer is unclear but I would offer some theories. First, the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank was at center stage with its UN membership initiative. Hamas seemed marginal while that diplomatic effort was playing out. With this war Hamas has once again grabbed center stage. Second, Hamas commits acts of terror fundamentally because it is a terrorist group. Hamas did not seize Gaza so as to improve school performance or medical care, or prove it could collect garbage efficiently. It seized Gaza to use it as a base for attacking Israel and the PA leadership in Ramallah. The raison d'etre of Hamas is fighting Israel with acts of violence. Third, in the months where Hamas tried to stop attacks on Israel by other groups such as Islamic Jihad because it did not at that moment want to force an Israeli response, Hamas lost support from young fighters. They signed up to fight, not to be bureaucrats, and some turned to other groups. So Hamas was, by fighting, seeking to reclaim its terrorist leadership mantle.

Whether Hamas benefits from the war depends largely on two things. First, will Egypt police the border between Sinai and Gaza, and prevent arms resupply to Hamas? After Israel left Gaza in 2005 this question arose, and it arose again in January 2009 after "Operation Cast Lead." In 2005 the United States negotiated an elaborate plan for border management, and it must be said that it failed totally—and fast. And in both 2005 and 2009 the government of Egypt under President Mubarak did nothing to prevent Hamas from smuggling in arms.

So we need to do better this time—or rather, Egypt does. I can see no Egyptian national security interest in having Iran arm Hamas, or having Hamas attack Israel, or having Hamas provoke another and perhaps wider conflict. So I think there is a chance here, and we should use this opportunity to press for it. In your consideration of the foreign aid we give Egypt, I urge you to have this front and center. Why give security assistance if it is not used in part to protect Egypt's security in the Sinai, and thereby to prevent regional conflicts spurred by Iran?

Let me turn now to the regional picture, and Iran.

Those missiles that were aimed at Tel Aviv and Jerusalem were not built by Palestinians in Gaza. They are all Iranian and represent yet another front in Iran's efforts to produce conflict, attack Israel, weaken U.S. interests, and support radical forces. The presence of Iranian Revolutionary Guards in Syria, fighting to preserve the Assad regime, is another example of Iran's reach. There are very many other examples—in Afghanistan, in Iraq, and in Yemen, for example. In that sense one may say the fighting in Syria and Gaza are proxy wars with Iran. Iran's decision to supply these missiles to Hamas demonstrates just how far it will go in attacking Israel—so far. Of course it may go further, and continues to develop a nuclear weapon.

Let me read to you from a Reuters report of last week:

> Iran is enriching uranium at a constant pace and international sanctions aimed at making Tehran suspend the activity are having no visible impact, the U.N. nuclear watchdog chief said in unusually blunt remarks on Tuesday….[A]sked whether sanctions had produced any deterrent effect, [IAEA Director General Yukio] Amano told reporters in Paris:

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> "We are verifying the activities at the nuclear sites in Iran and we do not see any effect. They are, for example, producing enriched uranium up to 5 percent and 20 percent with a quite constant pace." Amano, whose inspectors regularly visit Iran's nuclear facilities, added: "It has not changed. We have observed that the progression of enrichment has been constant. There has been a steady, gradual increase in the amount." [http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/20/nuclear-iran-idUSL5E8MKA6720121120]

The Gaza conflict is a reminder of two things with respect to Iran. First, that the Iranian threat is not only nuclear and prospective. Iran is today creating violence in the Middle East, and is the largest state supporter of terrorism in the world. Second, this is all being done by an Iran without nuclear weapons. One must assume that an Iran that has successfully defied the world and obtained nuclear weapons would be even more aggressive.

Let me make brief comments and Egypt and Jordan, and then conclude.

It has been widely said that Egypt's new Muslim Brotherhood government behaved sensibly during the Gaza conflict, and I agree. Egypt benefitted from this because it returned to center stage in the Middle East and the Arab world, and because it helped avoid a ground war it did not want.

But President Morsi instantly took advantage of the world-wide accolades to seize more power at home. Those who thought he was a dull bureaucrat, an apparatchik, a transitional figure, were proved wrong. Ironically, those were the exact things said of Hosni Mubarak when he rose to the presidency by accident—in that case the assassination of President Sadat. But like Mubarak, Morsi seems to have a will to power and is seizing more and more of it. Sadly it appears that those who argued Morsi was no democrat are being proved right.

U.S. policy should seek an Egyptian foreign policy that protects the Israel-Egypt peace treaty and prevents Hamas from being re-armed by Iran. These are in Egypt's interests as well. But we should not make the mistake we made for thirty years with Mubarak, basically paying no attention (except in 2004-2006) to his crushing of all moderate, liberal, democratic political forces. We have seen the counter demonstrations when he made his moves last weekend, by tens of thousands of Egyptians—and we know that he won the presidential election only by 51 to 48 percent. So millions of Egyptians want a moderate, secular state, and we should be supporting their right to freedom of speech, press, and assembly, to future free elections, and to an independent judiciary.

As to Jordan, we have in the past few months seen demonstrations of increasing size. Why now, in 2012, and not last year? I believe the central reason is economic. Due to increased energy prices and to the burden of caring for Syrian refugees, the government of Jordan is under very severe fiscal pressure. Those of us who seek stability in Jordan should help it address those issues. The United States is a generous donor and should continue to be so, but we need to work harder to press the Gulf oil producing nations to help. In past years they have, and recently the UAE's foreign minister said the GCC would help again. On November 20 he stated that Jordan's deficit was growing and that "we, in the UAE and the Gulf Cooperation Council, are studying ways to close or minimize this deficit." They should act fast—and will need a strong Saudi commitment to make the numbers work. I can think of few actions our own government could take now to

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foster Middle East stability that would be more useful than persuading the GCC nations to help Jordan, now, and generously.

Madam Chairman,

I thank you again for inviting me to address the Committee, and am happy to answer any questions you and other members of the Committee may have.

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Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you. Thank you very much, and I especially like those three reasons why you think it happened now.

Ms. Pletka, thank you so much.

STATEMENT OF MS. DANIELLE PLETKA, VICE PRESIDENT, FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICY STUDIES, AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE

Ms. PLETKA. Madam Chairman, thank you very much for having me. I just want to take a moment if I might, as Elliott did, and I think Rob will as well, to say thank you to both you and to Mr. Berman. It has really been a pleasure working with you for these years, and I look forward to doing so in the future as well, but thank you for your really fine stewardship of this committee. You deserve a great deal of commendation, and I know you have it from our community here in Washington.

Back to the reason that we are here today. I don't think it is any secret to anyone who follows the Middle East that there has been an enormous transformation in that part of the world, not just with the Arab Spring but really a broader transformation. We have seen Iran come to the brink of having a nuclear weapon. We have seen Hezbollah take over Lebanon, something that we don't talk about enough, in addition to all of the post-Arab Spring changes that we have seen throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

Part of the problem is that we still seem very flummoxed about what to do about that as a matter of national policy. We sit by and we wring our hands, we bemoan the troubles that we are seeing, but we really don't try to do enough about it. And I don't include the committee in this condemnation, but generally speaking I think that the attitude is one that the events are going too fast for us to be able to influence. And I would argue that that is not correct.

I think that trouble that we are facing is really underscored with this war with Hamas in Gaza, because all of a sudden you did see a realignment of the region in a way that is most unfortunate. Many of us had hoped that with democracy the region would turn inward and look more at the economic problems that are challenging these countries, look more at the challenges of developing democracy, and instead they have really done what is the habit of the last 50 years, which is to turn to the question of the Palestinians as the excuse and the topic of conversation that compels them.

So what are the options that are before us? When we think about each of these countries, in many of these situations we are looking at countries that are major recipients of U.S. assistance. In the case of one of Hamas' big supporters, Turkey, we are looking at a NATO ally. So what exactly are we supposed to do both about the PA and the Fatah which governs the West Bank, Hamas which is in Gaza, the partnership that they are again talking about, obviously the bid for non-member statehood inside the General Assembly today?

I think that we have a number of options. The problem is that what we are doing now isn't, in my opinion, right. It is not really a form of engagement. We have two forms of abdication of responsibility instead that are being advocated. The first is from those who suggest that what we really ought to do is wash our hands of the

region. Let us cut off all aid to all of these countries right now. Let us just stop it, rid ourselves of this problem. That in and of itself is a form of abdication of responsibility because this part of the world matters to us. Even if we turn our back they are going to come and follow us, and we do care about our partners in the region. We care a great deal about Israel, the only real democracy.

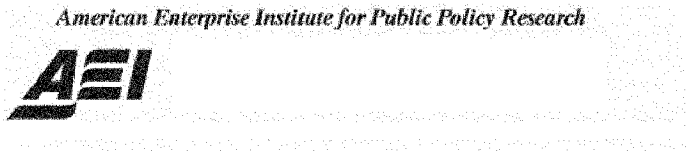
The other form of abdication is this sort of passive willingness to let the region drift. That is what we really see, I believe, from the White House. We just wring our hands, and the President engages when there is a crisis. He calls Morsi a few times. But at the end of the day they don't really do much. Once they are disengaged they are truly disengaged.

And you see that by the way if you look at the pattern of assistance to Egypt. I was gobsmacked, if I can say so, that the ask for foreign assistance to Egypt in both military assistance and economic support was exactly the same this year as it was last year, as if nothing had happened. Waivers are waved through. Conditions that are put on by the Congress are ignored. And yet it all seems to continue along. The same is true for the Palestinians.

The right approach, I think, if we recognize that we have a stake in the future is to walk a very fine line. It is, first of all, to recognize that we can't just continue to behave as if it is status quo ante. We can't treat Morsi as if he is the new Mubarak, which I think is the approach of the administration. Gee, you did a great job mediating that whole thing between the Israelis and Hamas. Let me give you some more money. And I am not really worried about your power grab. I am not really worried about that smuggling. That is the message we hear. We could do a lot more to ensure that aid is going for the things that we want it to go for and that if it doesn't go for that that there aren't benefits on the other side.

The same is true in places like Lebanon, by the way. We have given $1 billion in assistance to the Lebanese armed forces and yet we see that Hezbollah is continuing to attack Israel from the north, sponsor terrorism. Again, I think that a lot more vigilance toward the conditionality and a lot more guidance from Congress will be very helpful. The challenge of Turkey, I am about to run out of time. But I hope we will have an opportunity to talk about it in question and answer, because it is very, very important.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Pletka follows:]

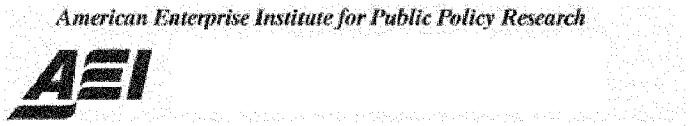


Testimony of Danielle Pletka, Vice President, Foreign and Defense Policy Studies,
American Enterprise Institute

Before the

U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs on "Israel's Right to Defend Itself:
Implications on Regional Security and U.S. Interests"

Thursday, November 29, 2012



Madame Chairman, Members of the Committee, it is my pleasure to join you for this timely hearing on the regional and national security implications of the recent hostilities between Hamas and the State of Israel.

Over the last decade, the Middle East has undergone a transformation as dramatic as the one that shaped the post-war independence era in the Arab world. While those changes are all familiar to the members of this Committee, it is worth reviewing them quickly if only to underscore their breadth and depth. Consider that a dictator has been ousted in Iraq and a new and democratically elected government has come to power. That from Tunisia to Libya to Yemen to Egypt, Bahrain and Syria, the people of the region have turned on their tormentors and – where they are able -- voted in new leaders. That Iran has gone from nuclear ambitions to the threshold of a nuclear weapon. That Hezbollah now controls the government of Lebanon. That the Hashemite dynasty in Jordan is at risk. And that the Arab League has taken a position against not one but two of its own for the first time in history.

And where is the United States in today's Middle Eastern maelstrom? Unfortunately, largely on the sidelines, wringing its hands, hoping to restore, if not the status quo ante, then at least the pseudo stability of the age of Arab dictators.

What *should* we be doing?

Let's step back for a moment and consider the question before this hearing: Israel's Right to Defend Itself. Israel's right to self-defense is not in doubt here in Washington. Elsewhere, increasingly, not only is Israel's right to self-defense, but its actual right to exist is in question. Indeed, those who arrayed themselves on the side of Hamas in the recent fighting pose a long term challenge, certainly for Israel, but also for the United States.

To whom did Hamas look for moral, diplomatic, economic and military sustenance after it launched a barrage of attacks against Israel? To Egypt, Turkey, Qatar, Lebanon and Iran. Others may have mouthed support for Hamas, but it was this group of stalwarts that stood behind the terrorist group until the end.

What are the implications for the United States? In the case of Iran, none that were not obvious before Gaza. We know Iran is a state sponsor of terrorism. Yes we should have a more proactive policy that addresses Iran's dangerous proliferation of missiles throughout the Middle East and looks more clearly at the implications of a proliferator to terrorists on the verge of having a nuclear weapon. But this is not a hearing about Iran.

Similarly with respect to Qatar, we are well aware of that state's tendency to play all sides of the field, and find new sides that were never played before. But Qatar's lamentable lack of principle is not news.

What of Turkey, Lebanon and Egypt? Should the United States sit on the sidelines and watch passively as a NATO ally and two recipients of U.S. assistance arrange themselves on the side of terrorists?

Indeed, we might ask the same regarding the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah. While many suppose that Hamas' motivation in attacking Israel was to gain parity with its Palestinian political rival, Fatah, and harness the wind of Islamist extremism emanating from the post-Arab Spring Middle East, the Mahmoud Abbas government had an opportunity to look responsible in the eyes of its western donors by eschewing the violence. Instead, various PA figures have claimed that they too were a part of the great "victory" against Israel; and today, Abu Mazen will turn to the United Nations General Assembly to seek non-member state observer recognition, slapping all those who requested he not do so – President Barack Obama included – in the face.

What can the United States do? Many in Washington have suggested that our leverage is limited, that the ructions of the Arab Spring are an "internal affair" that we need to do more behind the scenes. Others, predictably, resurrect the peace process as a panacea. The administration's position seems to be to coast ahead as if little of great moment has occurred, while turning our foreign policy focus to Asia.

Indeed, there are plenty on both sides of the aisle, in the Executive Branch and in Congress, who suggest that the United States abdicate its traditional role in the Middle East and simply adapt to its drift into extremism.

There are two styles of abdication recommended: The first, favored in certain quarters of the Congress, is the exhortation to end aid to those who displease us in the Middle East. That's very satisfying, has certain clarity to it, and saves taxpayer money to boot. Aid to Egypt and the Palestinians alone was more than $2 billion in FY 2012.

A second type of abdication appears to be favored by the White House and involves occasional crisis management (during the Gaza crisis, the President made three calls to Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi in one 24 hour period, and six calls over the course of a week), but otherwise a complacent passivity. In this vision, Morsi is treated as the new Mubarak. What was aid last year? $1.55 billion. Let's keep it there and throw in some debt relief to boot. The attitude the administration conveys is that aid is an entitlement for the countries that receive it, a view shared in foreign capitals as well. It is not a source of leverage, and should not be considered one.

The right approach is to recognize that we have a stake in the future of the Middle East, not just in peace between Israel and its neighbors, but in the course of the political and economic lives of these countries. They can develop in ways that are positive to their own and our interests, or the reverse. And we can influence that course a great deal, if we choose.

How we choose to influence the region is a genuine challenge: We must walk a fine line. If we cut off all aid in anger, we lose some of our leverage. If we open the flood gates and allow aid to spill out willy nilly, we leave leverage on the table, unused.

Take Egypt for starters. The numbers in question are breath-taking. $1.55 billion in U.S. aid ($1.3 billion to the military and $250 million in economic assistance), one billion more in debt relief, and $4.8 billion in promised IMF support. This is not chump change to Morsi, for whom economic success will be the barometer by which he is judged by the Egyptian people. Right now that aid is on hold, as it should be. Why is the hold right? Because the Congress must demand answers from the administration about how our aid and debt forgiveness is going to further American values and American priorities in Egypt. The fact that there has been little substantial change to the composition of our assistance package since the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak is a case in point.

And here's another question: We are providing $1.3 billion to the Egyptian military, presumably in part to bolster its ability to ensure security on the border with Israel, in part to ensure there is a balance of power within Egypt. But al Qaeda is now operating in the Sinai. And in Cairo, the military appears uninterested in playing any domestic role, consistent with Egyptian democracy, including that of guarantor of civil freedoms. So what is that aid for again? What is it buying?

More troubling still is that all of the conditionality that Congress has rightly put on economic assistance to Egypt – including certifications regarding rule of law, democratic transition, civil freedoms and treatment of Coptic Christians – have been ignored by the administration. Rather, the President and his delegates have chosen to exercise waiver authorities, a clear admission that Egypt is not on track to meet the conditions laid out in law. Those waivers must either be tightened or removed altogether.

Similarly, we might question the aid we provide to Lebanon. Since the 2007 Hezbollah war with Israel, the United States has provided more than $1 billion in assistance to Lebanon, much of it security oriented assistance to theoretically support the authority of the Lebanese Armed Forces. Yes, the same LAF that has watched as Hezbollah has rearmed itself with tens of thousands of missiles from Iran. Is it not appropriate to ask at a certain moment whether that money is doing anything at all to moderate Hezbollah's behavior? Should American taxpayers truly be subsidizing the Hezbollah-dominated Lebanese government? What message is being sent by continuing to do so even as Hezbollah supports and fights alongside Bashar al-Assad in Syria?

We can run through a similar litany for the Palestinians. Aid is authorized and appropriated by the Congress, but the conditions placed upon assistance are more often waived or disregarded than not. If Egypt doesn't want democratization assistance, surely it should not receive investment seed money. If Lebanon doesn't wish to disarm Hezbollah, then what is the purpose of arming and training the LAF?

In short, aid provides us leverage if it is used wisely, monitored constantly, and adjusted regularly. Cutting off aid deals us, at least in part, out of the game of the Middle East. It may ultimately be the only course available, but it should not the first choice.

Our challenge in facing Turkey's transition away from the Ataturk tradition of secularism and tolerance is much greater. Turkey is at once an ally, a serious economy, a democracy and a growing powerhouse in the broader Middle East. On the other hand, Turkey has paid little price for its support for terrorism in the region, its violation of Iran sanctions or its growing domestic abuses. Clearly we cannot thwart the will of the Turkish people; nor should we remain silent in the face of a government that has the dubious honor of the highest rate of imprisonment for journalists in the world. Should the U.S. continue to work with the Ankara government on issues of common concern like Syria? Yes. Should our relationship remain the same in light of other serious problems? No. And in that vein, constantly underscoring the close personal friendship between Barack Obama and Recep Tayyip Erdogan is highly inappropriate.

Think of it this way; we, the United States, have enormous political, economic and military power. Much of that power resides in the hands of the President, who has chosen not to use it to support U.S. ideals and principles. Rather, he is pouring both political and economic resources into governments that are working directly against U.S. interests. Congress has an opportunity to lead, but is being stymied. Results? Egypt supports Hamas, and only belatedly acts as a constructive force to end the violence begun by its friends in Gaza. Lebanon supports Assad. Qatar and Turkey pour oil on the flames.

Perhaps the ongoing human catastrophe in Syria is the clearest symbol of our uninterest. Before that conflict is done and Assad is dead or in exile, the civil war in Syria will spill over to Iraq, Turkey, Lebanon, Israel and Jordan. But the United States is hanging back, doing little where it must and nothing when it can.

It is possible that we will not be able to steer the Middle East down a more moderate path; indeed, it is possible that with the best of intentions and the cleverest use of America's power, we will fail. Right now, however, we are sitting on the sidelines and watching as the region transitions from secular autocracy to Islamist autocracy. That is a dangerous mistake.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, and I am sure that it will come up. Thank you.

Dr. Satloff?

STATEMENT OF ROBERT SATLOFF, PH.D., EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY

Mr. SATLOFF. Madam Chairman, let me join my colleagues in thanking you for your leadership of this committee. It has been a privilege to provide testimony today and before. May I also express my admiration and thanks to the ranking member? Mr. Berman, I truly hope our Nation continues to find ways to benefit from your wise leadership and from your excellent counsel and stewardship of American foreign policy.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. We won't count that time against you.

Mr. SATLOFF. Thank you, thank you.

We heard talk about the Gaza conflict. I would like to suggest two larger regional trends to put the Gaza conflict into context. The Gaza conflict underscored first that Israel is at the heart of two megatrends that are defining today's Middle East. These two megatrends are, on the one hand, the spread of Iran's hegamonic ambitions, and on the other hand, the spread of Sunni radical extremism. In most of the region these two trends are fighting each other. Syria, Bahrain, for example. However, in the Arab-Israeli arena these two trends have found a way to join forces as seen in the division of labor between, on the one hand, Iran's provision of rockets and weapons to Hamas, and on the other hand, the growing Sunni provision of political support to Hamas, Egypt, Qatar, Tunisia, Turkish. These two trends which fight everywhere else, on Israel's border fight together. This is a very dangerous situation for Israel's security and for our friendship and relationship with Israel.

Secondly, just in the Arab-Israeli arena itself, Gaza represents something bigger than just a conflict between Hamas and Israel. It represents what I would call "the end of the 40-year peace" between Arab and Israeli states.

Now I know it might sound a bit incongruous, but the fact is since 1973 there has been no state-to-state conflict in the Arab-Israeli arena. This is quite a big difference from the first 25 years of Israel's history. That is an enormous change and it has provided an opportunity for Israel's growth, development and the development of a U.S.-Israel strategic relationship.

However, however, now with Hamas' strong political backing from regional states, future historians will look back as this as the first episode of interstate conflict and certainly interstate competition in the Arab-Israeli arena in a quarter century. This isn't to suggest that war will occur tomorrow, quite the contrary. It may take some time. But it will only be postponed for tactical reasons between an Islamist Egypt and a potentially Islamist Syria and a radical Sunni impact in the Arab-Israeli arena, and in a strategic sense, I think conflict is likely in the long term.

Now with this disquieting turn of events what can the United States do? Let me focus very briefly on five issues. First, strengthen U.S.-Israeli cooperation. It is extremely important that the conflict in Gaza ended with the United States as supportive of Israel as when the conflict began. That was a vital message to Iran and

a vital message to other Arabs such as the Saudis. This needs to be expanded.

Secondly, deny Hamas a political victory. Hamas lost on the battlefield. They could win on the political battlefield depending on what happens with the Palestinian Authority, depending on how Hamas and the PA may come together. We have a vital interest in ensuring that any reconciliation in which Hamas becomes part of the PLO does not happen, and that what happens out of New York ends up in unconditional negotiations between Mahmoud Abbas and Israel. That is urgent.

Thirdly, incentivize more moderate behavior from Egypt. Egypt could go either way. They are moderate on a Monday, radical on a Tuesday. Is Morsi an ideologue or a national leader? We don't know. Clearly he is committed to the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood. We can't change that ideology, but through our conditionality we can help to change his behavior. And I commend to your attention a new report issued by my Institute yesterday by former Congressman Vin Weber and former White House counsel, Gregory Craig, urging constructive conditionality, clear in terms of the U.S. relationship with Egypt.

Fourth, Syria. This is the battleground where the forces of extremism on both sides are battling it out. We have to be more deeply engaged, Madam Chairman. We are not in the game, and the game will eventually be defined by those who are in it.

Last, let me echo my friend, Elliott Abrams', comment about Jordan. The Saudis have provided zero aid to Jordan this past year. That is why Jordan is on the brink of utter despair and perhaps the undermining of the kingdom. This is irresponsible. We need to do everything we can to change that situation to protect the only Arab country still actually talking to Israel.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Satloff follows:]

TESTIMONY DELIVERED TO THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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"THE GAZA CONFLICT AND THE END OF THE FORTY-YEAR PEACE"

By

DR. ROBERT SATLOFF
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY

HEARING TITLED: "ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO DEFEND ITSELF: IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL SECURITY AND U.S. INTERESTS"

NOVEMBER 29, 2012

Madame Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to express my personal gratitude to the Chairman, with whom I have had the pleasure of working from her earliest days in this role, for the opportunity to express my views on the critical issues of this hearing. And let me add a note of appreciation and admiration to the Ranking Member, who I have known for many years and with whom I have had the privilege of traveling to the Middle East; I hope our nation continues to benefit from your wise leadership and devotion to public service for many years to come. To all members of the Committee, thank you.

Recent days have witnessed an important turning point in modern Middle East history – a phrase I do not utter lightly. I turn the Committee's attention less to the specific events of the Gaza conflict but rather to the context in which the conflict transpired and concluded.

- Hamas rocket attacks against Jerusalem and its environs during the recent conflict marked the first time Israel's capital came under long-range attack from an Arab military for the first time since the 1947-49 war.
- With the launching of rockets from Gaza and Sinai and the shooting of artillery shells from Syria, all during the month of November 2012, Israel was on the receiving end of long-range fire over three international borders for the first time since the 1967 war.
- The potential for Islamists in Syria, led by the Muslim Brotherhood, to emerge as the dominant force in the military opposition to Bashar al-Assad and to play a leading role in a post-Assad regime raises the prospect that Cairo and Damascus will be governed by ideological allies for the first time since before the 1973 war.
- Last week's declaration by the Supreme Guide of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, a man to whom Egypt's current president has sworn fealty, calling for "jihad"

against Israel when Muslims achieve the requisite unity and, in the interim, the arming of Hamas and other "resistance" forces to carry on the fight against Israel is the most bellicose and provocative statement by an Egyptian leader since the signing of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty in 1979.

- The visits this month to Gaza of the Qatari emir, the Egyptian prime minister and the Tunisian foreign minister highlight the normalization of Hamas in Arab politics and the most serious challenge to the Arab consensus in support of the Palestine Liberation Organization and its step-child, the Palestinian Authority, since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993.

Individually, each of these items deserves careful scrutiny and close analysis, as they each have unique causes and specific military and political ramifications. Taken together, they constitute a seismic shift in the make-up of Middle East politics.

Indeed, I believe it is appropriate to view the Gaza conflict as marking the beginning of a new era in the Middle East – an era defined by the end of the region's Forty Year Peace.

I know that it is incongruous to think of the Middle East – the region so closely associated with terrorism, assassination, suicide bombs, intifada and civil war; the region of Saddam, Qadhafi, Khomeini, and Bin Ladin -- as having enjoyed a Forty Year Peace. But that is exactly what characterized inter-state relations between Israel and Arab states in the era since the October 1973 war.

In its first twenty-five years of independence, Israel's history was characterized by multi-state war with intermittent bouts of unsuccessful diplomacy. Six Arab armies invaded the fledgling Israel in 1948; Israel fought four Arab armies in June 1967; twelve Arab armies participated, to varying degrees, in the 1973 war. In the forty years since, Israel has fought no wars against an Arab state. During this period, its history has been characterized by frequently successful diplomacy with intermittent bouts of terrorism and asymmetric war against non-state actors.

While the difference between these two realities may not be great to the grieving mother, the widowed wife or the orphaned child, the difference is profound in strategic terms. For the past forty years, Israel knew no state-to-state attack on any of its borders. The main threat on its borders came from a non-state actor, Hizbollah, and from the intra-state threat of rebellion, terrorism and insurrection known as the first and second uprisings (popularly known as *intifadas*).

Further afield, of course, Israel was a target for Saddam Hussein's long-range missiles and the two ends of the Iran's threat spectrum, terrorism and nuclear ambitions. But there is a profound difference between the urgency and reality of regional war and the challenges Israel has faced over the past forty years. Indeed, it is this difference that gave Israel the freedom and latitude to develop from a broken, near-bankrupt, third-world economy to a first-world economic and technological power and, along the way, to emerge as an important strategic asset to the United States.

With Hamas' strong political backing from regional states, future historians might very well view the Gaza conflict as the first episode of a new era of renewed inter-state competition and, potentially, inter-state conflict in the Arab-Israeli arena. This is not to suggest that full-scale Arab-Israeli war is in the offing – quite the contrary. Israel's potential adversaries, such as Islamist-led Egypt and an Islamist-led post-Assad Syria, may quite likely be consumed with other priorities, such as sorting out internal socio-economic problems or resolving domestic ethnic disputes, for years or even decades to come. This focus on problems at home may, for a long time, mask the strategic shift now underway – a shift in which countries that used to share strategic interests in preventing direct state-to-state conflict may find tactical ways to postpone conflict to another day. But that doesn't make the shift any less real or menacing, either for Israel or U.S. interests.

What makes this development particularly worrisome for friends of Israel is that it puts the Jewish state at the heart of two mega-trends that are defining what can be termed the "new new Middle East." The "old new Middle East," a region of peace, trade and regional cooperation, reached its heyday in the mid-1990s, when Israelis were welcome everywhere from Rabat to Muscat. The "new new Middle East" is the region defined by the twin threats of Iranian hegemonic ambitions and the spread of radical Sunni extremism, a vast area where Israelis are not only unwelcome but where they are building fences along their borders to separate themselves from the turbulence swirling around them.

In some parts of the region, such as Syria and Bahrain, these two trends are fighting each other, whether directly or via proxies. But in the Arab-Israel arena, these two trends have found a way to join forces, as seen in the division of labor between Iran's provision of rockets and weapons to Hamas and the growing Sunni (Egyptian-Qatari-Tunisian-Turkish) provision of political support to Hamas. That these two trends, which battle each other ferociously elsewhere in the Middle East, can find common ground in their battle against Israel does not augur well for Israel's strategic situation in the future. Indeed, given the injection of Iran into the Arab-Israeli arena via its patronage of Hizbollah and arming of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, it may be necessary to the traditional term "Arab-Israeli conflict" into "Islamist-Israeli conflict," which would truly underscore the retrograde nature of current regional dynamics.

Despite this disquieting turn of events, there is much the United States can do, individually and with partners, to mitigate this negative shift and to advance U.S. interests in security and peace. In that regard, I offer these brief observations:

- **Strengthen US-Israel cooperation**: The fact that the Gaza conflict ended with the Obama administration as strongly supportive of Israel and its right to self-defense as when the conflict began has strategic reverberations, both to Iran and to Arab states that share with Israel fear of Iran's hegemonic goals and nuclear ambitions. Indeed, failure to have provided clear, public support for Israel in this

crisis would have made more likely unilateral Israeli action against Iran's nuclear program and Arab coming-to-terms with Iran's regional objectives. It is important for Washington to build upon this positive display of bilateral cooperation to ensure that Israel has the tools it needs to deter any further adventurism along its borders, including additional support for the Iran Dome anti-missile system, and that regional players see that such cooperation extends to operational cooperation and coordination in addressing the Iranian nuclear threat, in all its aspects.

- **Deny Hamas a political victory**: The achievement of a Gaza ceasefire would be undermined if it led to Hamas capitalizing on the recent conflict to improve its political standing vis-à-vis the Palestinian Authority. For all its problems – and they are legion – the PA is a fundamentally different sort of political entity than Hamas and its leadership advances a fundamentally different sort of political agenda than does the Hamas leadership. Hamas is committed to perpetual war against Israel and sees diplomacy as a tool in that conflict. For its part, he PA has renounced violence and the armed struggle; while its current diplomacy, including its reckless appeal to the United Nations, makes mockery of its commitment to a solely negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, one should not belittle the fact that it still advocates diplomacy, not violence, as the tool to achieving its aims. It is important for the Obama administration to work with Ramallah, Jerusalem and supportive Arab and European capitals to ensure that the PA does not collapse from lack of Arab financial support, thereby undermining the slim reeds of security cooperation and economic relationship that still remain the pillars of Israeli-Palestinian ties, and to prevent Hamas from capitalizing on the popularity of confronting Israel to erode the diplomatic option supported, at least in theory, by the PA. This could include, for example, convincing Mahmoud Abbas that the logical follow-on to his United Nations gambit would be to open long-stalled negotiations with Israel, without preconditions.

- **Incentivize moderate behavior from the "new Egypt"**: One of the most important outcomes of the Gaza conflict was the emergence of Islamist-led Egypt as a pivotal player in the "new new Middle East." Ideologically, President Muhammad Morsi and his government share a worldview much closer to Hamas than to Washington. Nevertheless, Morsi played a "constructive" role, to quote President Obama, in achieving the Gaza ceasefire. The reason is simple – given the crushing economic problems facing Egypt, Morsi calculated he had more to lose in terms of U.S. aid and support for international loans if he acted as an unvarnished ideologue than if had to gain by contributing to the ceasefire. And along the way he has succeeded in lowering the bar on what Washington expects from Egypt – he has ended all political contact with Israel and relegated Egypt-Israel ties to the dark shadows of intelligence and military professionals, for example, and only uses the term Israel when uttering phrases like "Israeli aggression." Still, the lesson for the Administration is critical – while it may be impossible to moderate the Muslim Brotherhood's Islamist ideology, it is eminently possible to moderate its political behavior through the intelligent use of

American leverage. This principle now needs to be applied to all aspects of the U.S.-Egypt relationship, with a special focus on the "regional peace" and "strategic cooperation" issues so central to U.S. interests. In the Gaza context, this should include conditioning a portion of Egypt's foreign military assistance on counter-terrorism measures in the Sinai and counter-smuggling efforts to prevent the re-supply of Hamas, the failure of which would certainly undermine the prospects for a lasting ceasefire.

More generally, I would like to take the opportunity to bring to the Committee's attention a new bipartisan task force report issued yesterday by The Washington Institute on this topic. Written by former Republican congressman Vin Weber and former Obama White House counsel Gregory B. Craig, this report is titled *Engagement without Illusions: Building an Interest-Based Relationship with the 'New Egypt.'*

In this report, Messrs. Weber and Craig advocate a policy of presenting Egyptian leaders with a set of choices that would give them a pathway to act as responsible national leaders rather than as religiously inspired ideologues. Specifically, they have the following recommendations:

1) that the President agree to certify to Congress that Egypt is fulfilling two well-defined baskets of commitments -- on "regional peace" and on "bilateral strategic cooperation" -- as a condition of continued provision of U.S. aid and political backing for international loans.
2) that through private conversation and public messaging, the president and congressional leaders should explain to Egyptians an additional "informal conditionality," i.e., how difficult it would be for the United States to maintain a close and mutually beneficial relationship with a government that was moving backward on constitutional democracy or that engaged in substantial violations of human rights or measures against women and religious minorities.
3) that the Administration should use a portion of Egypt's military aid—at least $100 million to start, and increasing over time—to incentivize more aggressive efforts to combat terrorism in Sinai, given the urgency of this issue to U.S. interests.
4) that the Administration engage with the broadest possible spectrum of political actors in Egypt, especially the non-Islamist opposition. Not only is this a way to guard against the widely held impression that Washington actually made the Brotherhood's rise to power possible, but strengthening non-Islamist opposition presents the best opportunity for pulling the governing Islamists in a more moderate direction.

Taken together, Messrs. Weber and Craig argue that building a businesslike relationship with Egypt based on a clear strategic bargain – offering benefits for cooperation and penalties for non-compliance – is in the best interest of both our countries. I commend the report to you.

- **Hasten the demise of Bashar al-Assad's regime:** One unfortunate consequence of the Gaza conflict was to deflect attention from the regional conflagration with far greater strategic consequence – the fighting in Syria. The outcome in Syria will have enormous impact on the shape of regional politics for years to come. Regrettably, at this point, it is difficult to see any "good" outcome – the options range from "bad" to "worse." In my view, there is no chance that Assad can "win," in the sense of restoring his previous role as the undisputed master of a pacified and compliant Syria. However, with Iran and its Hizbollah allies doing their best to support Assad by killing their way into an ethnic showdown pitting Alawites and their collaborators against the country's majority Sunni population, with every passing day chances for a broad-based, pluralistic, consensual, multi-sectarian post-Assad regime are slipping away. In the meantime, while Syria's Muslim Brotherhood was always going to play an important role in a post-Assad arrangement, every day brings increasing likelihood that even more radical Sunni jihadists will have a dominant position in a successor regime. America's interest is to bring about the end of Assad's regime as swiftly as possible, to make palatable change more likely and radical, destabilizing change less likely. The Obama administration's reluctance to support the anti-Assad forces with the judicious supply of weaponry and protection is, in my view, a miscalculation of strategic magnitude. As recent reportage from Syria suggests, there is a real possibility that the regime's army is beginning to crack. The "endgame" may evolve slowly or, alternatively, it could come about with breathtaking speed. The opportunity to shape the post-Assad environment will go to those actors who played pivotal roles in bringing about Assad's demise. For the United States, it is getting late but it is not yet too late to act.

- **Prevent the collapse of Jordan:** Another key U.S. interest overshadowed by the Gaza conflict is the threat of deepening instability in Jordan, an anchor of regional peace and partner with the United States on numerous fronts. Jordan faces a daunting set of domestic and international challenges. At home, threads of opposition that normally would be at loggerheads with each other – the Palestinian-led Islamist movement and the East Bank-led, largely secular "Hirak" movement – have joined forces in their criticism of what they view as officially-sanctioned corruption and faulty economic management. This has produced the largest protests the kingdom has seen in many years. Abroad, Jordan fears being squeezed by the Islamist powers emerging in its immediate neighborhood – Egypt, Syria and the increasingly popular Hamas. While Jordan has benefited greatly from generous U.S. economic support, one of its other main source of foreign aid – Saudi Arabia – has inexplicably dried up, forcing the kingdom to adopt painful austerity measures that exacerbate its political crises. Addressed individually, Jordan could survive these challenges; but they seem to be coming at the kingdom all at once and Jordan's ability to absorb them is limited. For the Obama administration, a weakening of Jordan's commitment to its pro-West, pro-peace orientation, let alone a weakening of Jordan's stability, would be a disastrous blow to U.S. interests, one that makes much more likely the return to

inter-state conflict in the Arab-Israeli arena. It is important for Washington to enlist the help of Jordan's current and erstwhile friends, including Riyadh, to take measures now, before it is too late, to preserve stability in Jordan.

These are the most urgent policy priorities in the Arab-Israeli arena. Further afield, there is much the United States can do to address the twin challenges of Iran's hegemonic ambitions and the spread of radical Sunni extremism, but they are outside the scope of today's hearing. I hope to have the opportunity to address those wider issues on another occasion.

Madame Chairman, while I opened on a pessimistic note, pointing out that we appear to be witnessing the end of a forty-year era of Arab-Israeli state-to-state peace, I would like to close on an optimistic one. It has to do with U.S. leadership.

The creation of that era of peace whose end I now bemoan was due in large part to American leadership, with successive U.S. administrations recognizing that strengthening the U.S.-Israel relationship and building diplomatic alternatives to conflict were two pillars of what proved to be a successful U.S. strategy to secure American interests in a volatile Middle East.

Today, despite all the talk about multi-polarity, energy independence, American decline, and the urgency of a strategic tilt toward Asia, the Middle East remains a region of vital importance to the United States and there is no outside power that even comes close to the United States in its ability to wield influence in it. To be sure, we cannot make the Middle East in our image, nor can we turn back the tides of Middle East history. But I believe that U.S. leadership, creatively conceived and effectively applied, remains the indispensible element in preserving our interests and those of our allies, such as Israel, in the face of the dangers of the "new new Middle East." I look forward to working with you and the Administration to ensure the wise and efficient exercise of that leadership.

Thank you.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, excellent point. Thank you so much for wonderful testimony. I will begin the questioning period, and I would like to ask this to all the three of you.

The Iranian regime has clearly been a key enabler of Hamas, of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, all the extremist groups that are operating in Gaza. They provide arms, funding, political support. By continuing to support Hamas and other extremists, what do you believe are the strategic objectives that Iran has in the Levant, particularly for Egypt, and do you believe that Iran will now introduce more advanced weapons systems into Gaza? And lastly, what policies or programs could the U.S. pursue to effectively counter Iran's efforts in this area? I will start with Mr. Abrams.

Mr. ABRAMS. I need about 4 hours to answer those questions because they are very tough. Iran is looking for influence in the Sunni Arab world, and believes that one of the great ways to do it is to appear to be the enemy of Israel. They are counting on hatred of Israel among Arab populations to gain them popularity, because what they are doing at home in Iran is clearly not gaining them popularity. What they are doing in Syria is losing them popularity, where they are helping the regime slaughter people who happen to be Sunni Arabs. So it is partly that—just seeking to gain more for themselves, and also of course they want to attack Israel and they want to help anybody who is willing to, any group that is willing to attack Israel.

Ultimately, the only way to solve that problem is regime change, and that may take 1 year and it may take 21 years, and we obviously don't know but I wish we had a more honest debate about this, more or less in the way we talked about the Soviet Union. We dealt with the Soviet Union but we also made it clear that we thought in the long run the answer to the problems it created was the end of that regime in Russia.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Let me just go to the other panelists. We only have 3 minutes left. Thank you, Ms. Pletka and Dr. Satloff.

Ms. PLETKA. It is actually very interesting, you ask a very important question. I think that at the beginning of the Arab Spring the Iranians were very worried. This really seemed to be a Sunni phenomenon. Democratic revolutions, Sunnis ousting their leaders, and feeling empowered. And we all talked a lot about the gulf between the Sunni and the Shia and the implications for that and the problems that Iran would face as a result. In fact, you even saw that in Gaza, fascinatingly, when Hamas broke with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. The Iranians were very angry with them and, in fact, ousted them from a number of regional meetings and indicated that they were going to lessen their support for Hamas, and that they were going to throw a lot more of it to Palestinian and Islamic Jihad. And you saw, fascinatingly, members of PIJ converting to Shia. And last year, on the holiday that the Shia just celebrated, Ashura, there was a Hamas-led round-up of Palestinian, Gaza-living, Shia converts, and they were all arrested. And this was sort of the phenomenon of the region at large, right happening right there.

But what the Iranians have managed to do and with the help, frankly, of the Egyptians, the Turks and others, and the Qataris

as always, is to turn this around again to make it much more about Israel than it ever was before, and to try and use that populism to save face, as Elliott rightly said, and to benefit themselves in the region. Very interesting and very bad of us.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Dr. Satloff?

Mr. SATLOFF. Madam Chairman, let me make two brief points on either end of the supply chain. First, about Iran. You are absolutely right that what the Iranians want to do, and they are doing this for clear reasons. They want to undermine any sense of stability on the Eastern Mediterranean as they are active elsewhere in the region.

On a policy level, I think that we tend to focus our policy too much by isolating the nuclear issue and not recognizing how the nuclear ambitions of Iran are connected to an entire Iranian strategy. We tend not to focus on what I would call Iran's "ground game," what Iran is doing on the ground, in Iraq, in Syria, in the Arab-Israeli arena. We tend to focus the nuclear issue in one basket and everything else separately. This is a comprehensive challenge that the Iranians are posing to us.

Secondly, Egypt, and here an operational suggestion. The Egyptians do not want to invest their military in stopping the smuggling or in stopping the flow of weapons over the Gaza border. I would support and I urge, and this report I mentioned earlier recommends as well, that we begin to do a micro conditionality in our military assistance to Egypt, which specifically targets a certain amount of money, perhaps $100 million to start, specifically for spending in Sinai on counterterrorism and counter-smuggling. The Egyptians will fight this because all they want are tanks and airplanes. But it is very important that we begin a conversation with them with money on the table to move them to focus on this most important of urgent issues.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much. Thank you to all three of you.

Mr. Berman is recognized. Thank you, Howard.

Mr. BERMAN. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Focus if you would for 5 minutes, or as much of that 5 minutes as I leave you, on the isolation of Hamas. We saw in this recent thing, the Emir of Qatar, the Prime Minister of Egypt, a group of 10 Arab foreign ministers, the Turkish Foreign Minister, all coming for hosted visits to Gaza. Turkish Prime Minister indicates he won't be far behind. And we all remember the Gaza-Cast Lead-Erdogan reaction back in 2008.

How should the U.S. relate to these visits? These are countries we generally enjoy friendly relations with. Should we be indifferent to them? Should we actively discourage them? How? These visits undoubtedly erode the legitimacy of the PA and Ramallah as the rightful governing body for Palestine, for Palestinians in both the West Bank and Gaza. Does it have additional significance, operational significance for Hamas, leading to a dilution of the now long-standing Quartet's requirements that Hamas renounce violence, recognize Israel, accept previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements, or are these visits not to be made much of, minimal in impact as long as the U.S., the EU and like-minded countries con-

tinue to regard Hamas as a terrorist group and recognize the PA? Is there something significant happening here?

Ms. PLETKA. It is a question you have been grappling with as a committee for a long time, how to best isolate Hamas. I find that if we spend a lot of time talking about these visits we aggrandize them more than they deserve.

I think there are two important things to look at. The first is, where is Hamas going? It is no longer in Damascus. Where is its leadership going to be based? Is it going to be based in Gaza, in which case Gaza is as we now know a terrorist state, or is it going to be in Qatar or in Cairo? Because when it was in Damascus we designated Syria as a state sponsor of terrorism. Are we going to do the same for where they land next time? That is part one.

Part two, for all of these incredibly peripatetic leaders who like to go and visit Gaza, what are they doing for the Palestinian people, not for Hamas? That is the question I would like them to answer publicly. What are you going to be rebuilding? What budget payoffs are you going to be doing? What streets are you going to pave? What sewer system are you helping? Because what they really do is look for publicity.

Mr. BERMAN. Well, the Qatari announced $400 million.

Ms. PLETKA. Let us see them deliver it.

Mr. BERMAN. Well, yes, good point.

Mr. SATLOFF. Mr. Berman, I take a somewhat more jaundiced view of the visits to Gaza. I think these are very serious challenges not just to the Palestinian Authority, but to the idea that there could be a diplomatic resolution of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. The rise of Hamas' legitimacy undermines the very notion that we have spent decades trying to advance, which is that the resolution to this conflict is done at the negotiating table. Every leader that goes to Gaza, although they say they want to support the people of Gaza, in fact, undermine the chances for peace.

Now we can hold Egypt more responsible, which is very important, but I think we have to also look to Ramallah. If the Palestinian Authority wants to commit suicide we can't stop them, but we have a very strong interest in retaining the idea that peace is something to be negotiated. And that is the best antidote to Hamas' political success.

Mr. ABRAMS. I would only add, Mr. Berman, I think if these countries are going to start treating Gaza like a separate entity, Israel can do so as well. And one of the things that I think the Israelis ought to do is, for example, hand Gaza over to Egypt when it comes to things like electricity. They are now part of the Israeli grid, which is ludicrous. I think the integration of Gaza more into the economy of Egypt is one way of responding to these visits.

Mr. BERMAN. It is a hostile act to Egypt. Thank you very much.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Berman.

Mr. Rohrabacher, the chairman of Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, is recognized.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Well, thank you very much, Madam Chairman, and again thank you for your leadership over the years on many of these Middle Eastern questions as well as some of the more vexing questions that we face internationally. First, let me note that I again repeat what I stated in my opening 1-minute, fast

little statement. It appears to me, and I have been here for 24 years, and Elliott and I worked in the Reagan White House years together, so that is 31 years altogether, Elliott. And Elliott, all had a full head of hair at the time and——

Mr. ABRAMS [continuing]. Like Mr. Fortenberry, if you remember.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. But let us just note this is, I am looking back now and looking at what I have learned over the years, and it seems to me that the turmoil that we are now experiencing in the Middle East is a result of specific policy and approaches made by this administration, specifically a projection of weakness when the administration believes it is projecting sincerity.

We could see that in the beginning when the President went on an apology tour throughout the Middle East trying to prove how sincere he was going to be, and also trying to prove how sincere he was to the mullahs, how he refrained from supporting the democratic opposition in Iran after a phony election there. And of course we have had a lack of support for the other democratic elements, not only Iran, but our friends throughout the Middle East when they became, got under pressure, we weren't there to support them so that we could prove our sincerity to the old Middle East as a whole.

I think this has left the wrong impression among decision makers in the Middle East that we are weak. They do not see sincerity as strength. And I think that the worst possible example of this is the last example, which is the latest display of the administration's irrational approach to sincerity, was President Obama's insistence for almost a week after the crime that the deaths of four American diplomatic personnel in Benghazi was a result of movie rage instead of radical Islamic terrorism, which are words that he doesn't seem to be able to put together, radical Islamic terrorism.

And what I would like to ask for the panel is, how does the President's willingness to bend over backwards and blame movie rage, and let us note when he blames movie rage what he is really blaming is freedom of press in the United States because we permit them to make movies that somebody might be outraged over, rather than blaming bloodthirsty, radical Islamic terrorists who are active in that region, and does this bending over backwards to blame the movie rage rather than the terrorists, doesn't this result in more rockets being fired by the Palestinian irreconcilables into Israel and more rockets being provided to those irreconcilables by the Iranian Mullah regime?

And I will start with Elliott, and what do you think?

Mr. ABRAMS. I will try to be very brief. When I talk to many Israelis and many Gulf Arabs, they have a very similar take on the situation. That is, that they worry a lot about the weakness they believe is being projected by the United States.

I worry a lot about an American conclusion that those guys are winning and are the wave of the future. In Egypt today, thousands and thousands and thousands of people out in the streets protesting the Morsi power grab. When he won he won 51–48. Forty-eight percent of the people, a little bit more, of Egypt voted against him. They did not want a Muslim Brotherhood President. So they

are willing to struggle against Islamic extremism, and their question for us is, are we willing to help them?

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Right. Anybody else have a comment on that?

Mr. SATLOFF. Congressman, to me, the most visible place where American leadership is at stake is in Syria right now. Syria is the battleground where the Iranians are fighting a last-ditch effort to maintain influence and control of the key resistance link from Beirut to Tehran, and where other forces—some radical, some Jihadists—but where other forces are trying to defeat them. We have a clear interest in Iran's defeat. I believe, while we have shown leadership in some very important areas such as U.S.-Israel cooperation, I bemoan the fact that we haven't shown leadership on this most important strategic battleground in today's Middle East.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you.

Ms. PLETKA. I couldn't agree with Rob more about Syria. The only area that I think we really need to dig down onto is the question of our aid to these countries. Are they an entitlement for Egypt, for Lebanon, for the Palestinians, or should they come with conditions? Should they be altered every year? Should they be revisited every year? Should they be serving our interests, and should they be predicated on serving those interests, shared interests by the way with a lot of the people of the region, as Elliott rightly said?

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much. Thank you, Dana.

Mr. Sherman, the ranking member on the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade.

Mr. SHERMAN. Dr. Satloff, you have proposed the idea that we earmark some of our military aid to Egypt. There is discussion of increasing total aid. You are proposing that this come out of the aid we are currently providing, and what do you think of the Egyptian and others who argue that we should keep the military aid and increase the economic aid to Egypt?

Mr. SATLOFF. Congressman, I focus, I mean I am not trying to avoid the answer, but my focus is not so much on a particular dollar amount but how we use the aid to advance a better U.S.-Egyptian relationship, a relationship where our interests are not at the moment being adequately addressed by the Government of Egypt. Aid, in and of itself, is not a huge amount of the Egyptian economy. What is really important about our assistance is what it signals to the international community, the IMF, international donors, et cetera, because the Egyptians are on a fiscal cliff that is far steeper than ours. And so we can use this moment and including inside the military aid, some of it, to get them to address our interests in a way they aren't doing right now.

Mr. SHERMAN. And I would point out that while the cease-fire is preventing rockets from being fired at Israel, and the Egyptians deserve some credit for negotiating that, all those rockets are in Gaza precisely because Egypt has not patrolled a 10-mile long border.

Mr. Abrams, should we be providing, covertly, money to those who are waging war or other conflict against the Iranian Government, particularly Iranians Kurds, the Baloch, and other ethnic minorities?

Mr. ABRAMS. I am not fully familiar with what we are doing right now, but generally speaking my answer to that would be no. I think the battle against that regime is mostly going to be political. I think the people of the country already hate that regime, and I think we should be doing more to denounce it and make it a pariah state. I think we should do much better than we are doing in broadcasting and access to internet. I worry that by giving aid to some of the minorities you might turn other pieces of the population against you or give the regime excuses for further repression.

Mr. SHERMAN. Should we be funding dissident Farsi-speaking groups?

Mr. ABRAMS. I think we should be doing that. If we can do it effectively so that the regime doesn't find out, I think we should very much be doing that more or less in the way we have in past years in other countries.

Mr. SHERMAN. One of the benefits of being a Member of Congress is I get to ask questions that are impossible to answer.

Mr. ABRAMS. Yes.

Mr. SHERMAN. What is the likelihood that Israel will attack, arrange nuclear facilities in the next 12 months and what are the main factors in that decision? How important are the opinions of the American people, Congress and administration to that Israeli decision?

Mr. ABRAMS. My answer to that would be they are very important. But if the Israelis conclude this is A, that it is an existential threat, and B, that they can actually have a successful military attack, they will do it even if they believe they will have a lack of support from Washington.

Mr. SHERMAN. Do you think they will do it or not?

Mr. ABRAMS. I think that if the negotiations do not succeed in producing something——

Mr. SHERMAN. Got you.

Mr. ABRAMS [continuing]. By the spring, yes, I do.

Mr. SHERMAN. And Ms. Pletka, would an Israeli attack necessarily be limited to the nuclear facilities, or would Israel, might Israel instead, in effect, hold hostage everything above the ground in Iran and all of its infrastructure, in demanding that U.N. inspectors be able to dismantle those nuclear facilities that cannot be bombed?

Ms. PLETKA. It seems it is not only your privilege to ask impossible questions but that you actually enjoy it.

Mr. SHERMAN. That is the nature of privileges.

Ms. PLETKA. I have absolutely no idea what Israeli military planning is for Iran. Everything that we understand about how they look at the challenge, and everything that we understand from a variety of open sources about how the Iranians have configured their defenses and have configured their nuclear sites, would indicate that the Israelis are only interested in a very limited strike on Iran that would include their nuclear sites. But again I am only guessing.

Mr. SHERMAN. And finally I would point out that if the electric grid of Gaza is plugged into Egypt that diminishes or takes away one possible pressure point that Israel could use in a non-lethal way. And I yield back.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Sherman.

Mr. Royce, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade is recognized.

Mr. ROYCE. Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. I was going to ask a question of Ms. Pletka, and it has to do with the debate over Egypt and the direction. And that one observer made an observation this week that Western analysts continue to misread Morsi, imagining that his primary political challenge is to improve the Egyptian standard of living. Not so. His real challenge is to consolidate the power of the Brotherhood. I was going to ask you if you think that author is off the mark or not.

Ms. PLETKA. It is probably at the center of the debate that is going on in Washington right now about the nature of the Morsi leadership, the intentions of the Muslim Brotherhood. We can endlessly parse the differences. There are great generational differences inside the Muslim Brotherhood. It is not a monolith, like any political party is not a monolith. And so I imagine that there are those within the Muslim Brotherhood who seek only to consolidate its power, and there are others who actually seek to retain power.

If Egypt is going to remain a democracy, then the President of Egypt whether he is from the Muslim Brotherhood or anything else is going to have to respond to the dire economic needs of the Egyptian people. The Egyptian economy is in a very bad place. And although Rob talked about the amounts being very small, I sat down and looked at what they were. One-point-fifty-five billion dollars in U.S. aid, $1.3 billion for the military, $250 million in economic assistance, $1 billion more in debt relief from the U.S. taxpayer, and $4.8 billion in promised IMF support. We should think of those numbers as important to the Egyptians and they give us a lot of leverage.

Mr. ROYCE. You would think that. But I will tell you what gave me pause and why when I read that piece in the Journal last week I was thinking about this. You have a situation where we all see that the Egyptian economy needs help, and then you have this massive power grab that comes from Morsi as the IMF loan is still in the process. It hasn't been finalized. And what struck me about the timing of it was as though the power grab was more important than the economic resurgence of Egypt.

Ms. PLETKA. Well, wait a minute. Look at it from his perspective.

Mr. ROYCE. Yes?

Ms. PLETKA. We have conditions on our assistance that suggest that in the event of such a power grab, in other words that democracy is not proceeding at a pace, no protections for minorities, for Christians, for women, et cetera, that our aid will not go forward. But it has. Also I didn't hear much of a peep from the IMF suggesting that that power grab is going to interfere with Egypt receiving that aid. The problem is not with Morsi. He is making the correct calculation that he can do what he wants. The problem is with those parties that choose to continue to provide the assistance in the face of what he does.

Mr. ROYCE. Well, you are saying then that in a way their actions are contingent upon the State Department that would be willing to actually cut off the spigot in the face, let us say, of noncompliance

with respect to civil society or rights to the Coptics or these rule of law issues that we have spelled out, and given the fact that this has been ignored by the administration, ignored by the State Department, he is actually correctly reading our lack of desire to really try to enforce the conditionality, and as a consequence simply shrugging and saying, well, I will do the power grab in the middle of this based upon what I have seen so far.

So you would argue that if we would apply the conditions that we have made in terms of aid we might be able to see better compliance with respect to these rule of law issues and respect for minority rights in Egypt?

Ms. PLETKA. We can certainly make an effort, and we would at least do it with a clear conscience that we hadn't been subsidizing bad behavior on the part of the Egyptian Government.

Mr. ROYCE. There is another issue I want to bring up but I am going to ask Mr. Abrams. The Washington Post reports this morning that Qatar is bankrolling a new generation of Islamists across the Middle East, raising questions about its vision for the region and whether some of its policies are in direct conflict with U.S. interests. And as you go down the laundry list, the most hardcore elements in the Libyan struggle were funded there by Qatar. They assisted the Shahab. There is a report this morning that shoulder-fired missiles appearing in Syria are compliments of their funding. And then of course you have got the visit of the Emir to Gaza last month pledging hundreds of millions in aid. And so I would just ask you about your read on Qatar here.

Mr. ABRAMS. We are almost out of time, but I think that story was accurate and I think the Qataris are relying on us to protect them from Iran, but then in the Sunni Arab world are engaging in support of Islamist elements that are really against the interests of the United States, and continuing to use Aljazeera in ways that harm the interests of the United States.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you, Elliott.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you. Thank you so much, Mr. Royce.

Mr. Cicilline of Rhode Island is recognized.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you, Madam Chairman, for conducting this hearing, and thank you to our witnesses. I think it is critically important of course that the United States maintain our unwavering support for the state of Israel, and while no one should live under the constant threat of violence, this is the reality as you know for the people of the state of Israel on a daily basis. And it is difficult to understand how that reality will change until Hamas recognizes Israel's right to exist and rejects violence.

So my first question is, what do you think is the likelihood of the cease-fire continuing for a sufficient period of time to create the space for a real dialogue, and are there things that we can do or should be trying to do in the Congress to enhance the likelihood that that cease-fire remains intact?

Mr. SATLOFF. Well, first, Mr. Cicilline, as a native Rhode Islander, I thank you very much for your question. I think it is quite unlikely that this cease-fire lasts. The cease-fire is an interlude for Hamas to re-arm. The Iranians will try to re-arm them. It will be

up to the Egyptians and others to try to stop them. The Egyptians will only do it if we incentivize them properly to do it.

The best thing that we can try to do to try to deprive Hamas of a political victory from this is to use our influence in Ramallah with the Palestinian Authority to try to get them to reengage in direct diplomacy with the Israelis unconditionally, which would isolate Hamas. Right now the PA is isolated. Hamas is riding high. We have to change that dynamic, and that could only be done with a little bit more leadership and backbone from the head of the Palestinian Authority.

Mr. CICILLINE. And actually that leads nicely to my second question, is what do you think it the impact of the activities at the United Nations? How is that to play out, and are there things we either should do in response to that in the context of what is happening in the region or should not do? And obviously others can chime in.

Mr. ABRAMS. The Israeli Government seems to have taken the position in the last week that what is more critical is what the PA does after that vote, and I think we should also focus on that. The British Government said recently that they won't vote for this resolution at the U.N. today unless they get assurances from President Abbas, for example, that he won't try to go to the International Criminal Court. I think we should base our reaction on what he does, whether he uses that vote, in essence, to make trouble and try to embitter relations between Israel and the PA.

Mr. SATLOFF. I agree with Elliott. On the one hand he could choose to compete with Hamas for the radical side of the Palestinian world or to underscore that he has a different path. If he chooses to compete he will lose, because Hamas has better ways to be radical. They can shoot and kill. He can't. If he does, he is gone. So we have to encourage him to choose the diplomatic path. Right now we are doing this, I think, in a very quiet, soft way, and this is where I urge even more forceful American diplomacy and leadership to try to compel him to engage in diplomacy. It should be in his interest. If it isn't, then there is a serious problem in Ramallah.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you, I am sure.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Cicilline.

Mr. Chabot, the chairman of the Middle East and South Asia Subcommittee, is recognized.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to all the panel members this morning. It seems to me that Hamas and its anti-Israel allies have used this latest turmoil in the region to advance the much broader delegitimization of Israel strategy that has really been in play for some time now. For instance, Hamas and its allies focus on the human cost of Israeli strikes, and an often sympathetic media is quick to cooperate with a photo of an injury or a tragedy or death which if they are civilians clearly that is not what is intended.

But we hear little about unprovoked attacks on civilians in Israel. We are told over and over how many Israeli rockets were fired into Gaza, but we rarely hear about the thousands of rockets launched into Israel for years and hundreds that were launched in the month leading up to what, I believe, was a measured Israeli response to Hamas terrorism. We see it constantly at the U.N.

which spends an inordinate amount of time considering anti-Israel resolutions. Their delegitimization of Israel campaign is sophisticated, well organized and ongoing. Our response in the U.S. it seems is inadequate, muffled.

What can the current administration do that it is not doing now to promote a counter-campaign and reverse this dangerous trend? How should we, how should the administration, how should Congress deal with this delegitimization of our strongest ally in the region, Israel? Maybe I will start with Elliott and go down the line, if I can.

Mr. ABRAMS. I think the delegitimization gains strength when there is an appearance of a gap between the United States and Israel. And I think that has happened in the last 4 years. I think it closed a bit during this war because the administration gave strong support to Israel throughout the war. I think that has got to continue. When we say things either, or do things in the White House or at the United Nations that give evidence of deep disagreement between the U.S. and Israel, it is a huge encouragement for the delegitimization campaign. And that, I think, we turned a corner here perhaps in this war and I would like to see us going in a better direction.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you.

Ms. Pletka?

Ms. PLETKA. In adding to the vein of what Elliott just said, one of the most interesting things that you hear from Gulf leaders is their shock at the gap that had opened up between Israel and the United States over recent years. They view that as a barometer of American friendship and loyalty. If you won't stand by Israel, how can we trust you to stand by us against Iran? And the answer is of course that they don't.

In the direct question of what we can do to fight this delegitimization campaign, we can ensure that there are consequences. We provide an enormous amount of money to various U.N. agencies, not to speak of the U.N. itself. We don't need to do that. It is not that important. The American taxpayer will thank you if you don't do it. So if we did it to UNESCO, you, the Congress did it, there is no reason not to continue down that line to others who recognize a Palestinian state. If they don't want U.S. money they don't need it.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you.

Dr. Satloff?

Mr. SATLOFF. A slightly different suggestion, Congressman. If you look closely at the Gaza cease-fire, the actual text, there is nothing in this text that suggests that there will be any prevention of the importation of rocketry into Gaza. There is no international document. There is no international resolution which makes it beyond the pale. Even if it will be infringed upon, even if it will be violated, I would like to see the U.N. Security Council pass a resolution calling on all member states to prevent the importation or transfer of military weapons and articles into Gaza. At least the world will be on record, and I think that will be very important.

Ms. PLETKA. May I say a word? You mean like the resolution that we saw stopping weapons from being transferred into Lebanon in the wake of the Lebanon war, the U.N. Security Council resolu-

tion that is violated every single day without comment from any party including by the way the United States, not to speak of the U.N. Security Council?

Mr. CHABOT. I have got less than half a minute left. Let me take over here for that small portion of time I have. I just wanted to make one point. I find it particularly commendable, Israel informing, because a lot of the rocket making facilities and other are in residential areas or near mosques and near schools, that they were actually trying to notify civilians, yet we still see, the Washington Post just had a picture showing probably a tragedy, but there were also stories about, perhaps some of these things were film or pictures from Syria and other things. But I think Israel really did try to avoid civilian casualties here and should be commended for that. Yield back.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chabot.

Pleased to yield to Mr. Connolly of Virginia.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Madam Chairman, and welcome to our panel. Mr. Abrams, good to see you again. Let me ask, maybe you, Dr. Satloff, how did Iron Dome work in the recent unpleasantness?

Mr. SATLOFF. By all accounts the Iron Dome performed quite magnificently. I mean it not only stopped an extraordinarily high number of rockets, but one of the main elements of Iron Dome is that it can, in a blink of an eye, determine whether a rocket is headed into an area in which it has to actually send an anti-missile to stop. So it can determine just like that whether it deserves being shot at, which saves an enormous number of Iron Dome rockets. Now there isn't an unlimited supply at which the Israelis are beginning to address, but it performed, I think, beyond any reasonable expectation.

Mr. CONNOLLY. And this was a collaborative effort with the United States Government, with the Obama administration——

Mr. SATLOFF. This was on a——

Mr. CONNOLLY [continuing]. Trying to provide an extra security screen?

Mr. SATLOFF. This, I think, is one of the finest examples of U.S.-Israel strategic cooperation. It didn't only benefit Israeli civilians, it added to Israel's deterrence and it added to the sense around the region that the United States is willing to spend money to prevent these sorts of things, which strengthens America's sense of deterrence against adversaries more broadly.

Mr. CONNOLLY. And in some ways it is in contrast, is it not, to the protection and promised attempts at protection during the Kuwait war, the Persian Gulf I, when we, the United States, attempted to assure Israel and provide some security measures. What was the missile program?

Mr. SATLOFF. Patriots.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Patriot missile. But compared to Iron Dome, performance was significantly below what you just described, would that be fair?

Mr. SATLOFF. No. Congressman, the technology is very different. We are today at a much more advanced ability to address incoming rocketry. I think that the United States did a valiant effort in the Iraq crisis to provide the technology that we had. What Iron Dome

represents is a joint U.S.-Israel development of entirely new and advanced technology to address this current weapons system.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Yes, fair point. I was simply saying in terms of the goal apparently we did a much, technology, other investments and so forth, but we are doing a much better job of actually achieving that goal this time than we were able to do for whatever reasons, mostly technology maybe, but I mean there were real disappointments with the Patriot missile, after the fact, at that time as I recall.

Mr. SATLOFF. Yes. Thankfully, we are better today at it than we were then.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Yes. Mr. Abrams, do you concur with Dr. Satloff's analysis?

Mr. ABRAMS. Fully.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Question, and maybe to you, Ms. Pletka, first, what do you think Israel's response should be and will be with respect to the non-member or state observer status at the United Nations for the Palestinians?

Ms. PLETKA. I am always reluctant to tell other countries what to do because I don't like it when other countries try and tell us what to do. I understand that the Israelis——

Mr. CONNOLLY. All right, then what if we reframe the question. What do you think their response will be?

Ms. PLETKA. Well, I think the Israelis, as I believe Elliott made clear, I think the Israelis have decided that they are going to judge more by the actions that the Palestinians take in the wake of this decision than by the decision to seek the status by itself. It is quite a contrast from the last iteration of this where the Israelis fought very hard to ensure that the Palestinians wouldn't take that course. I think they recognize that victory is in the cards for the Palestinians and they want to ensure that the Palestinians receive every incentive to behave responsibly in the aftermath. We will see if they do.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I am going to run out of time, so final question. I would like both you and Mr. Abrams maybe to just clarify what you were saying about President Morsi. I thought, maybe I missed it, Elliott. You raised the question about the percentage of the vote he got, and I guess I am a little puzzled by that. I mean many American Presidents have actually been minority Presidents, and I could think of one of your favorites in recent history who didn't even get the popular vote and, nonetheless, was sworn in as President. And to question legitimacy—okay.

Mr. ABRAMS. No, I didn't mean to question legitimacy. He clearly won. It seemed to be a free election. But it shows us that the Muslim Brotherhood candidate just got 51 percent of the vote, and almost half of Egyptians didn't want a Muslim Brotherhood President. So the resistance to the Brotherhood and Islamization of Egypt, if you will, is very widespread in Egypt. That was the only point I was making.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Ah, okay. Thank you. Thank you for your clarification.

Mr. CHABOT [presiding]. The gentleman's time is expired.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I thank the chair.

Mr. CHABOT. The gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Kelly, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KELLY. All right, I thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it is great that we can meet in these beautiful rooms and dress nice and have really nice talk about what we would really like to see happen in the world. We realize that at some point there need a good dose of reality. I don't think these people are wired the same way we are, and we continue to think that if somehow we talk nice and play nice and continue to fund bad activity that eventually they will come in to think the way we think. I don't think history plays out that way. In fact, I think it is attributed to Einstein that the definition of insanity is to do the same thing over and over again and expect a different result.

Now Ms. Pletka, you make some really good references to us giving money to people, aid, taxpayer money or taxpayer-backed loans that we are borrowing from other people, 42 cents on the dollar, and sending it overseas and thinking that somehow if we give these people enough money they are going to play nice. In my lifetime at 64, I have never been able to buy off people who have evil intents by just giving them money. It kind of emboldens them.

The numbers that you talked about are staggering, and the fact that we set conditions and then don't enforce them, why? I mean I have only been here 20-some months, and thank God I actually lived a normal life. I am trying to understand how anybody in the world could sit here and watch what is going on and continue to think that somehow this is going to change, when I know and you know that the only time news is made in the Mideast is when Israel fights back. Then it becomes some kind of a horrible military effort.

So please, what conditions? I mean and at what point do we wake up and say, you know what, we are cutting off your allowance. You are not going to school, you are not playing by the rules, and you know what, doggone it, we are not going to fund this. These numbers are staggering.

Ms. PLETKA. The numbers that are involved are staggering. Our aid to a variety of countries in the Middle East, of course Israel included, is very substantial, and for many years made up the majority of the foreign assistance that the U.S. taxpayer gave out internationally.

I sat down and looked over the conditions on aid to Egypt, and I was actually very impressed. Anybody who says that our Members of Congress don't do anything all day hasn't read these bills. They are very thoughtful conditions. They are important conditions. The problem is that each one comes with a waiver. And the problem with waivers is that invariably they are exercised, and it is that that needs to be stopped.

I believe that we have a strong interest in remaining engaged. I don't think we should wash our hands either of Egypt or Jordan or the Middle East or the Palestinians. We have a stake in their future. We turned around and walked away from Afghanistan when we shouldn't have and al-Qaeda rose up in that place. I don't think we should walk away, but we need to go to work every day. The Iranians come to the table and fight every day for their agenda in the region. We just drop in occasionally when we feel like it to

wag our finger or say thank you. That is our problem and that is mainly an executive branch problem. And the problem is that their feet need to be held to the fire. If I were in your place, I would be taking waivers away and making sure that conditions are adhered to.

Mr. KELLY. Thank you, I appreciate that. I think a total commitment is much better than an impassionate involvement from time to time. The Palestinian Authority, they are going to ask the General Assembly today to have a non-member observer state status, okay. And I think this is kind of crazy when you look at that entity and say, this is the same as the Holy See in Vatican City. Let us give them the same type of legitimacy.

What could we have done to prevent that from happening, the United States now? What statements could we have done? How could we have better articulated that that maybe the other people in the world would have sat up and take notice? Elliott, please.

Mr. ABRAMS. Well, we did once back them off on this, and that would lead me to believe that maybe if we had pushed harder maybe they would have agreed to postpone it again. I don't think that is a thing that happens this week. I think that there were some American diplomats, I am told, up in New York a few days ago trying to get the Palestinians to back off, but they weren't going to do that 3 days in advance. I am talking about 3 months ago, 6 months ago. It seems to me that had we pushed harder and put more of the relationship on the line maybe we could have gotten them to back off yet again.

Mr. KELLY. Well, long-term policies or long-term strategy is certainly better than at 5 minutes to midnight running out and trying to talk to some folks.

Mr. ABRAMS. Yes.

Mr. KELLY. Okay. I am greatly concerned, and also some colleagues, that we sent a letter to the President and the Secretary of State about the U.N. Arms Trade Treaty. I am greatly worried about that because oftentimes things happen when you are not looking, and this would give some legitimacy again to some very bad players in the world.

Do you see anything that we are doing at an administration level that is making sense to securing that part of the world and establishing some type of permanent peace? I know it is kind of an open-ended question. You have 10 seconds to answer it.

Mr. SATLOFF. Congressman, first, U.S.-Israel security cooperation is very important as a pillar of building a peace. Secondly, what we are doing quietly in the Persian Gulf, the fact that there are now on a regular basis two carriers in the Persian Gulf is a very important signal of American commitment. It is not enough, and the Iranians can see through this and see around it like what they are doing in Gaza. But there are elements out there that can be built upon to advance our interests more effectively.

Mr. KELLY. Well, in conversations I have had with——

Mr. CHABOT. The gentleman's time is expired.

Mr. KELLY. Thank you, all.

Mr. CHABOT. I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman be given 1 additional minute. Okay, the gentleman given 1 minute.

Mr. KELLY. Thank you. The conversations I have had, I have had an opportunity to travel that part of the world, and one of the questions, underlying questions, of every one of these countries we stopped at they said, when is the U.S. going to be a leader again? Not leading from behind, but when is the U.S. going to actually establish some very strong lines that established us as a strong ally and friend, and not one that you are not sure. This wordsmithing that takes place in this town is incredible. I know for sure that anything I am told is not the truth. But there is no strategy. If we do not lead from the position of strength there will not be peace in the world. And us leading from behind is a false, these are flights of fantasy that somehow we are going to somehow change the direction of that region of the world. It just isn't going to happen. Because this one, I have said this many times, if it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, this is a duck. If we continue to think it is some kind of a swan, we are crazy.

Mr. CHABOT. The gentleman's time is expired.

The gentleman from New York, the ranking member of the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Mr. Engle is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ENGEL. I thank you, Mr. Chair, and I want to thank our distinguished panelists for being here, all of you, and Mr. Abrams. I always like it when Elliotts can testify. I think it enhances all kinds of dialogues.

Let me say that my way of thinking is this. I am for a two-state solution. The way they are going, to ever get peace in the Middle East is for both sides to sit down and negotiate across the table with no preconditions. I think it is preposterous that the Palestinians make every kind of demand on Israel as a precondition for even sitting down and talking, when the preconditions they want to get out of Israel are really final status issues. And to me, if you are really serious about peace you sit down and talk.

And to my way of thinking, the reason why peace has been elusive, it is not a lot of different issues that people say, it is the fact that 64 years after the establishment of a state of Israel as the national homeland for the Jewish people, the Palestinians refuse to accept Israel as a Jewish State. And being a Jewish State doesn't mean that only Jewish people can live in that state. It means that it is the homeland of the Jewish people.

And the Palestinians should read the United Nations resolution in 1947 which partitioned Palestine, it clearly states, into an Arab State and a Jewish State. And I would remind the Palestinians that when that happened Israel accepted the partition and declared their state. And the Arabs who could have had their state right then and there, instead of taking their state immediately attacked Israel and tried to destroy it. And that happened again and again. And when they talk about settlements there were no settlements between 1948 and 1967, and the Palestinians in the Arab world still didn't make peace with Israel. So it really makes my blood boil with all these things. And obviously what is happening at the U.N. today is just a shame because rather than enhancing peace I think it really sets it back.

I want to ask though about Turkey, because I have been very much chagrined over Turkey and the destructive role it is playing

rather than the constructive role it used to play. Last week, Israeli and Turkish newspapers reported that talks were conducted in Geneva between representatives of Israel and Turkey talking about normalizations between the two countries. I particularly was galled at Prime Minister Erdogan's calling Israel a terrorist state given Turkey's need to respond to the PKK, they think nothing about going into Iraq to get at what they call "Kurdish terrorists," but they deny Israel the right to protect itself from terrorists.

So I am wondering, what prospects does anyone on the panel see for these talks and for resolving any differences?

Mr. SATLOFF. Congressman, I had thought that there was a reasonable chance in the moment after Israel's January 22nd election if, indeed, as polls suggest, the current government or some variation thereof gets re-formed. That because of Netanyahu's strength and Erdogan's relative weakness, Erdogan is weaker today than he was 5 years ago politically, the economy in Turkey is hurting compared to 5 years ago, and because of the urgency of Syria as an issue that they share, I had thought that there is a chance that reconciliation might work.

But I do think, however, that the talks you referred to probably are not going to succeed, and that Erdogan's statements about Israel as a terrorist state truly poison this situation, and then, in fact, Erdogan has taken Turkey out as a key player. He sort of marginalized his own country. And this is, given what they have done nefariously in recent years, this is not such a bad thing but it does marginalize and make it less likely that we will see an Israeli-Turkish reconciliation.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you. In getting back to the discussions between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Back in 2000, 2001, when Arafat as far as I am concerned was offered a lot, Palestinian state on 97 percent of the West Bank, land swaps, part of Jerusalem, billions of dollars of aid, he said no. And it reminds me of Abba Eban's old slogan about how the Palestinians never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity.

What many people don't know is that in 2008, when Ehud Olmert was Prime Minister he offered even more in behind the scenes negotiations, I call it "the sun and the moon and the stars," and the Palestinians still said no. So I think when countries at the U.N. today are pointing fingers at why there is no peace, and unfortunately they will be one-sided and point fingers at Israel, I think that the history has shown us that if we are going to point a finger at one side for not having peace it should clearly by the Palestinian side. And I just want to know if anybody would like to comment.

Mr. CHABOT. If you could keep your remarks relatively brief because the gentleman's time is expired.

Mr. ABRAMS. Okay. Yes, I agree with interpretation, and I was in the government when Olmert made those offers. They were even more generous than the ones that Barak had made, and yet there was no Palestinian reply.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much.

The gentleman from Indiana, Mr. Burton, who is the chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe and Eurasia, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURTON. Mr. Kelly, you talked about a normal life awhile ago, and I want you to know that you are not going to lead a normal life for all the time you are here in Congress. This is probably the last time I will be speaking from this dais. I have been here 30 years. And so I really appreciate all my colleagues and I appreciate to this being the last panel because I have known Elliott for all of the 30 years, when I didn't have grey hair and you had hair.

Let me start off, Mr. Satloff, by saying, you said we ought to do something in Syria. Russia and Iran are supporters of Assad. What would you do?

Mr. SATLOFF. Congressman, I think there is a lot the United States can do to support the military opposition to Bashar Assad without getting any American soldiers anywhere near the territory of Syria.

Mr. BURTON. Let me just interrupt you. There are al-Qaeda operatives there and other radical groups, and one of the things that I have been concerned about in my 30 years here, I believed when I first came that there ought to be democracy around the world. We ought to work for every single country to be democratic, and then I started seeing radical groups winning elections and making things even worse.

And the thing that concerns me right now is the entire northern tier of Africa is in a mess. Gaddafi was a bad guy, but we had Members of Congress talking to him just a year or 2 ago. He was a bad guy. He was going to go into Benghazi and wipe out some radicals down there, and we said, we can't let that happen. It would be a humanitarian disaster. So we got rid of Gaddafi and now the radicals are running that area and they killed our Ambassador and some other people and we can't even go in there anymore. So sometimes you get things you really don't want.

In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood has said they wanted the destruction of Israel. They have said that for years. In my mind they are still a terrorist organization. Nevertheless, we supported that change there. We said the Arab Spring was not a bad thing. So the entire northern tier of Africa has changed. It is in a state of flux and we really don't know where it is going.

And in Syria we have got a real mess and it is a civil war, and what concerns me is we don't know what is going to happen. We don't know who is going to take over and what impact it will have on our interests. And one of the things I think I have learned over the years is that before you do something you try to figure out what is going to happen afterwards. You look down the road. This administration did not look down the road in Libya. They did not look down the road in Egypt. And now they are talking about doing what you are suggesting in Syria and we don't know what is going to happen next.

And so my concern is that we have a foreign policy and a Secretary of State and a President that says, okay, if this happens what do we have to deal with later? Are we going to still give foreign aid? I agree with what Ms. Pletka said that foreign aid should be conditional. It should be reviewed annually. There should be a

Sword of Damocles hanging over these people knowing that if they don't at least work with us they are going to have that sword fall on them. They are not going to get anything else. There has got to some carrot and a stick approach, and right now it just seems like there are just carrots, and I think it is a mess. I think that is, and I am going to say one more thing about Iran.

Iran is working not only in that northern part of Africa and the Middle East, they are working in Azerbaijan trying to undermine that government. They are working in the Gulf States. I was just over in Bahrain and elsewhere, they are sending people over there to try to work with people to keep them whipped up to throw out that government, and that government is a government that has worked with us for probably 30, 40 years. And we have got the 5th Fleet in there, which is extremely important for us as far as security in the region.

So I will end up by just saying that I think that our foreign policy needs to be much more farsighted. We need to look ahead before we support something, and make sure we are not jumping from a flame into a raging fire. And I am afraid right now there is going to be a major war in the Middle East and I don't think it is going to be 3 or 4 years. I think it is going to be quicker than that because of our foreign policy. Now if you want to say something in 16 seconds, you are welcome.

Mr. ABRAMS. Mr. Chairman, I want to say something in 16 or 12, how much I have appreciated working with Mr. Burton in these, it is 30 years. Years when it looked like the Republican minority might be permanent. Years when there were some very tough foreign policy fights and everyone in the Reagan and Bush administrations certainly knew that one of the people that you could always count on to fight for the President and for the country was Mr. Burton, so thank you.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you. I feel the same way about you, buddy.

Mr. CHABOT. The gentleman's time has expired.

On behalf of the chair and the other members of the committee, I would like to thank both Mr. Berman and Mr. Burton for their long service to this institution, and it is a better place because both of you have served here, and we appreciate your service and wish you the best in the future.

And Mr. Marino from Pennsylvania is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MARINO. Thank you, Chairman. I apologize for being late, so I may ask a question that has already been asked but please amuse me if you would. I was a prosecutor for almost 20 years. I was a district attorney and a United States attorney. I have tried many cases myself. Capital murder cases, terrorist cases, you name it I tried it. And there was a certain period of negotiation that took place between the prosecution and defense, but at some point the prosecution had to draw the line in the concrete and say this is it. All offers are off the table and we are going to trial. I see we are at that point right now.

And Secretary Abrams, if you could answer this question for me, and if any other members want to chime in afterwards, please do. What is the downside, and we know this administration has not done it, I don't foresee President Obama doing it, but what is the downside to making it very clear concerning Israel, Palestine, Iran,

Syria, any of those other terrorist countries of simply saying, whatever Israel wants, we, the United States, are right there with them, side-by-side, backing them, doing what they feel is best to protect the people of their country? What is the downside of that? Because we keep pandering to these terrorists.

Mr. ABRAMS. I think your fundamental point is right, Mr. Marino, that we will bring more security for Israel, we will bring more security for the U.S. and we will bring the possibilities of peace much closer if it is understood that we are a closely supportive of Israel. Any form of distance just encourages Hamas and other terrorist groups. It encourages Iran to think they have got an opportunity here. So distancing ourselves from Israel is only going to produce fewer chances for peace and it is only going to harm American interests in my view.

Mr. MARINO. Ms. Pletka? Am I pronouncing that correctly?

Ms. PLETKA. I agree with both you on what was at the heart of what you said, but I think this is really a larger problem. This isn't just about the United States and Israel. I think if you asked the President, he would say that he has been a staunch ally of the state of Israel. Now I don't agree with that assertion. Nonetheless, the problem is really one of where the U.S. stands in the world. It is not just where we stand on the question of Israel. It is where we stand in the Middle East. It is where we stand on the question of Iran. Are we going to negotiate with Iran and allow them to have a nuclear capability? Because I can tell you that that is what they think and that is what our allies think. If we are adrift as a nation in shaping our foreign policy and unsure of whether we wish to lead the world or we wish to just sort of play along with the world, then we are going to have these problems in more places than just the Middle East.

Mr. MARINO. I agree with you completely, but again reaching back to my experiences of prosecutor, it only took me one time in a major homicide case to prove to defense and defendants more so that the deal is off the table, because the next time it rolled around they said, he pulled the trigger before, he will do it again.

Dr. Satloff?

Mr. SATLOFF. Congressman, America's traditional role in pursuing peace and security around Israel has been, one, to be a close ally of Israel, and then secondly, to try to be an honest broker of peace. Now too many people interpret "honest broker" as the opposite of close ally when, in fact, one becomes a more effective honest broker the closer one is with your close ally. And so what is very important, if you want to pursue peace and security together, is to merge the concepts of close ally and honest broker instead of, as is so often advocated, instead of separating that we can be a balanced distance mediator instead of a close partner in helping to achieve peace and security.

Mr. MARINO. I understand your position but this is rhetorical. How has that been working lately?

Mr. SATLOFF. Well——

Mr. MARINO. It hasn't been, and I want to make it clear on that. It hasn't been, what I have learned through my career, my studies abroad, my emphasis on the Middle East. I have a friend from Iran who just left the country before the Shah was overthrown, and she

has said to me on numerous occasions and until today, you will never negotiate with terrorists until you go to the table with a bigger club than they have, and use it.

And in closing, my position is, the way we get the point across is to stand very, very closely with our friends and get the point across to our enemies. And just for the record, and I have said this time and time again, whatever Israel wants to do to protect the interest of their people which protects the interests of this country, I am there with them side-by-side, no holds barred.

Mr. CHABOT. The gentleman's time is expired.

Mr. MARINO. Thank you.

Mr. CHABOT. We are going to go to a quasi-modified second round here for the purpose of allowing Mr. Berman to ask a few additional questions. We will give him up to 5 minutes. The gentleman, the ranking member is recognized.

Mr. BERMAN. And I promise not to do it at the next hearing. Thank you very much. There was this article in the New York Times a day or two ago sort of about the strange things going on now. The Sunni-Shia tensions, how it is playing out in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

And I guess the question I have is, sort of what that part of the conflict, how that affects Israel, most particularly can Hamas pull, we talk about all the things Hamas has been sort of getting from these visits, but do they have any problem in balancing the support from Iran with their support from the Egypt-Qatar-Turkey folks? Do they risk something here? They apparently didn't risk, they got the Iranians mad but not mad enough to stop the supply, by turning against Assad. How long can they successfully play that game? That is one question I have. And maybe they can succeed in playing both sides of this.

And the second question, if you had asked me 6 months ago I would have said if the Palestinian Authority pursues the U.N. strategy we should fundamentally change the nature of our relationship with them. I am aware of countries and individuals drawing red lines and then, well, did I draw that right, red line, and changing it. If keeping the PA at least at this moment in time alive and given the problems with the Arab support for the PA, do we want to base an aid decision to the Palestinian Authority on what happens sometime today, or do we want to base it on some of the issues you folks have talked about? What is their approach to the criminal ICC? Maybe just as, or more importantly, what is their approach on the very interesting choice of imitating Hamas or making it clear that a negotiation is the way to achieve the goal. And is that a better way to decide the aid question?

Mr. ABRAMS. Can I just begin by saying, Mr. Chairman, I have a plane to catch, and if you will allow me to be excused to go to the airport.

Mr. BERMAN. Sure.

Mr. ABRAMS. Thank you.

Mr. SATLOFF. Congressman, on your first question, as long as our side, the side of diplomacy, is not even in the game then I am sure that Hamas is able to balance support from both Sunnis and Shia. Nothing succeeds like success and Hamas looks like it is doing very well. And they are able to have posters in Gaza thanking Iran, as

well as cashing the checks from the Emir of Qatar and welcoming other aid from other Sunni states. It really comes down, I think, to invigorating the idea that there is an alternative.

And this goes to your second question. I agree with what I believe is the thrust of your question which is, however reckless the Palestinians are at the U.N. today, this should not be the sole criteria, in my view, for determining the American relationship with them. There are at least two other things that are going on that are very positive, and that is security cooperation between the Palestinian Authority and Israel which has prevented terrorism between, coming from the West Bank against Israel. We don't forget that if we were sitting 10 years ago today we would be talking about bombs going off in cafes and schools and buses in Israel. And that hasn't happened now in years. It is not only because of the PA but the PA plays an important role.

And second, the economy in the Authority is functioning, such as it is. We need to try to build on that. We have to try to incentivize Mahmoud Abbas to act on his interest and to engage in negotiations. But if there is no diplomacy for an extended period of time, Hamas will win. Palestinians will see them as more successful, even if they offer no solution to the conflict with Israel.

Ms. PLETKA. People used to say that there are two sure things, death and taxes. I would add there a corollary, there are three sure things. Death, taxes and then belief that the peace process will solve all the ills of Israel and the Arabs. I don't believe it. I don't agree with Rob on this, though I have great respect for him. I think that the Palestinians have to get their own house in order and that that is very important. That doesn't mean that we end our relationship with them, but a Palestine that it does not have its house in order cannot make peace with Israel, especially cannot make a peace that will last that will be built on a solid foundation. That is part one. Part two——

Mr. BERMAN. Though how do you get your house in order with Hamas out there?

Ms. PLETKA. First of all, why did Hamas gain the popularity it had? Because of the malfeasance of Fatah.

Mr. BERMAN. Absolutely.

Ms. PLETKA [continuing]. A million people. Fine. When that happens your job is to show the contrast and to show it properly, not to play publicity games like went into the United Nations. That is old Palestine behavior and that is what we are seeing. No, no, look at me, I can kill more Jews than you can so I am better. Now everybody loves me. Nobody cares about corruption, failure of civil society, failure of governance.

We spend a lot of time talking about Fatah and Hamas and not a lot of time talking about the Palestinian people who have suffered more at the hands of their own government than they ever have at the hands of Israel. That should be the mission is to straighten their house in order and then hope to build a peace process that will be far easier on two stable societies rather than on one unstable one.

May I just take an additional 5 seconds and say something about the Sunni-Shia divide that you talked about? I think this is one of the most understudied and misunderstood conflicts in the region in

the fact that we have allowed Iran to take the mantle of protector of the Shia, who are truly downtrodden in much of the Middle East, is really wrong. The fact that we allowed the Government of Bahrain that the complicity of the Saudis to trample on the freedoms of the Shia in Bahrain was wrong. The same is true in Yemen. The same is true throughout the region. And we need to do a lot better in understanding the Shia of the Middle East and competing with the Iranians to protect their interests, interests of minorities and majorities.

Mr. BERMAN. Not to mention the Shia of Pakistan.

Ms. PLETKA. Yes, absolutely.

Mr. CHABOT. And the gentleman's time has expired.

Ms. PLETKA. Thank you.

Mr. CHABOT. On behalf of Chairwoman Ros-Lehtinen, I would like to thank the panel for their excellent testimony here this afternoon. If there is no further business to come before the committee, we are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 1:04 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Material Submitted for the Hearing Record

FULL COMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515-0128

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Chairman

November 26, 2012

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building **(and available live on the Committee website at http://www.hcfa.house.gov)**:

DATE: Thursday, November 29, 2012

TIME: 11:00 a.m.

SUBJECT: Israel's Right to Defend Itself: Implications for Regional Security and U.S. Interests

WITNESSES: The Honorable Elliott Abrams
Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies
Council on Foreign Relations

Ms. Danielle Pletka
Vice President
Foreign and Defense Policy Studies
American Enterprise Institute

Robert Satloff, Ph.D.
Executive Director
The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF FULL COMMITTEE HEARING

Day *Thursday* **Date** *11/29/12* **Room** *2172 RHOB*

Starting Time *11:00 a.m.* **Ending Time** *1:04 p.m.*

Recesses [ ] (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Rep. Steve Chabot

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session [✓]
Executive (closed) Session [ ]
Televised [✓]
Electronically Recorded (taped) [✓]
Stenographic Record [✓]

TITLE OF HEARING:

Israel's Right to Defend Itself: Implications for Regional Security and U.S. Interests

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Attendance attached.

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Rep. Al Green, Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes [✓] **No** [ ]
(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

Rep. Smith (SFR)
Rep. Connolly (SFR)
Dr. Satloff (SFR)

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED *1:04 p.m.*

Jean Marter, Director of Committee Operations

Hearing/Briefing Title: Israel's Right to Defend Itself:
Implications for Regional Security and U.S. Interests
Date: 11/29/12

Present	Member
X	Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, FL
X	Christopher Smith, NJ
X	Dan Burton, IN
	Elton Gallegly, CA
X	Dana Rohrabacher, CA
	Donald Manzullo, IL
X	Edward R. Royce, CA
X	Steve Chabot, OH
	Ron Paul, TX
	Mike Pence, IN
X	Joe Wilson, SC
	Connie Mack, FL
X	Jeff Fortenberry, NE
	Michael McCaul, TX
X	Ted Poe, TX
X	Gus M. Bilirakis, FL
	Jean Schmidt, OH
	Bill Johnson, OH
	David Rivera, FL
X	Mike Kelly, PA
	Tim Griffin, AK
X	Tom Marino, PA
X	Jeff Duncan, SC
	Ann Marie Buerkle, NY
	Renee Ellmers, NC
X	Robert Turner, NY

Present	Member
X	Howard L. Berman, CA
	Gary L. Ackerman, NY
	Eni F.H. Faleomavaega, AS
X	Brad Sherman, CA
X	Eliot Engel, NY
	Gregory Meeks, NY
	Russ Carnahan, MO
	Albio Sires, NJ
X	Gerry Connolly, VA
	Ted Deutch, FL
	Dennis Cardoza, CA
	Ben Chandler, KY
	Brian Higgins, NY
	Allyson Schwartz, PA
	Chris Murphy, CT
	Frederica Wilson, FL
X	Karen Bass, CA
	William Keating, MA
X	David Cicilline, RI
X	Al Green, TX
X	Sheila Jackson-Lee, TX

Opening Statement
"Israel's Right to Defend Itself: Implications For Regional Security and U.S. Interests"
Representative Christopher H. Smith
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
November 29, 2012
Rayburn 2172

An escalating clash between the State of Israel and Islamist militants in Gaza has been quelled for the moment, but the cease-fire remains fragile and dependent on interests that have little to do with a peaceful resolution of the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict.

Hamas was not holding its own in this conflict despite its obnoxious use of missiles aimed at civilians that are reminiscent of Nazi V2 attacks on London during World War II. Israel's Iron Dome anti-missile system is reported to have been 85% successful in engaging missiles headed for population areas up to 70 kilometers from their launch sites. A ground war launched by Israel could have further degraded the ability of Hamas and other Palestinian groups to threaten Israel's population with continuing missile attacks by enabling further Israeli strikes on Palestinian missile storage facilities. So the Hamas concession to temporary peace can in no way be construed as a commitment to peace, but rather a realization of the danger of defeat. Paradoxically, the truce actually offers Hamas an opportunity to restock and reposition missiles.

Egypt appears to have negotiated a cease-fire to at least appear to maintain the country's position as a peace-broker between Israel and the Palestinians and preclude a potential cutoff of U.S. assistance. Last year, the United States provided $1.3 billion in military assistance and $250 million in economic aid to Egypt. At a time when President Morsi's government is facing a backlash over his Iran-like seizure of executive power, an Israeli-Palestinian war next door would be a complication he doesn't need. However, a significant portion of his population is supportive of Hamas, as is Morsi himself, who accused Israel of committing an "assault on humanity" prior to negotiating a cease-fire.

So the cease-fire has no certainty of lasting beyond the needs of Hamas or Egypt's Islamist government.

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly (VA-11)

HCFA Full Committee: Israel's Right to Defend Itself: Implications for Regional Security and U.S. Interests
THURSDAY November 29, 2012
11am

After eight days of conflict between Hamas-led militants and Israel, the two parties agreed to a cease-fire. For now, the agreement has worked to contain the most recent violence in the region. As we've seen time and time again, a cease-fire is not likely to be a long-term solution; if anything, it underscores the need for peace in the Middle East. In order for such a peace to exist and for stability to flourish, rational actors must come to the table with the intent to negotiate a long-term agreement. First and foremost, this requires Hamas to: recognize the right of Israel to exist, forswear violence, and accept previous Palestinian-Israeli agreements that imply a two-state solution.

With regard to the Palestinian militants' response to Operation Pillar of Defense, there are several issues that require greater scrutiny. The first is the future of Egypt's role in Middle East peace. According to news reports, Egyptian authorities played a role in brokering the November 21 cease-fire. This is a positive development, but the future Israel-Egypt relationship is still unclear in the wake of a post-Mubarak Egypt. Another issue is Iran's role in supplying arms, such as Fajr missiles, to Hamas. When Iran is facing crippling sanctions and a plummeting currency, it does not behoove Tehran to continue supporting violent militants. This raises the question of where Iran sees itself in the future Middle East. Supporting violent militants and ignoring international opinion on Iran's foreign policy has not served the regime or people of Iran well.

The United States has been steadfast in its belief in Israel's right to defend itself. Whether it is through support for the Iron Dome missile defense system, or the ability and willingness to bring parties to the negotiating table, the U.S. can and does have a role to play in Middle East peace. Continuing this role requires the United States to be a fair and credible actor. It is folly for any observer to claim that certain preconditions—such as the previously mentioned ones regarding Hamas—indicate favoritism toward any specific party. The preconditions are common sense and have long been a part of United States policy vis-à-vis a long-term Middle East peace. With regard to the November 21 cease-fire, all parties who agreed to end violence and stop the grave loss of life took a welcome first step. But a long-term peace requires lengthy and thorough negotiations by entities that respect peace.

On the issue of the Palestinians, the United States has strategic reasons for ensuring that Palestinians have access to basic services. For FY13, the U.S. State Department proposed $370 million through USAID to the Palestinian people for four specific sectors: governance, rule of law, civil society; health, education, social services; economic development; and humanitarian assistance. State also proposed $70 million in funding through the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement Account. It is important to note that USAID has strict vetting

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly (VA-11)

requirements for its programs,[1] which subject West Bank and Gaza programs to a specialized process for non-U.S. organizations and to annual audits to ensure that no terrorist groups intercept the funds. Moreover, annual appropriations bills routinely prohibit aid for Hamas or Hamas-controlled entities. The United States also funds training of and non-lethal equipment for PA security forces in the West Bank, along with funding for the rule-of-law infrastructure (such as building police stations) and the justice sector.[2]

It has been longstanding U.S. policy to endorse a two state solution, which, by its very nature, requires governments that can provide basic services for their people. In the case of the Palestinians, this is a work in progress. The United States and its allies have been laying the groundwork by providing aid for specific purposes, in the hopes that a future, long-lasting peace is viable. Such a long-lasting peace will not suddenly materialize—it will require a thorough and fair negotiating process with a commitment from all parties. I look forward to having the U.S. be the honest broker in such a negotiating process, and to having an unwavering commitment to such a process by all parties involved.

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[1] As outlined in Public Law 111-117.

[2] For FY12, State proposed $77 million for Training, non-lethal equipment, and garrisoning assistance, supporting efforts by the U.S. Security Coordinator; funding for justice sector and rule-of-law infrastructure was proposed at $36 million.

[NOTE: "Engagement without Illusions" by Vin Weber and Gregory B. Craig, a Washington Institute Strategic Report submitted for the record by Robert Satloff, Ph.D., executive director, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, is not reprinted here but is available in committee records.]