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SAFEGUARDING ISRAEL'S SECURITY IN A VOLATILE REGION

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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SAFEGUARDING ISRAEL'S SECURITY IN A VOLATILE REGION

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2012

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST
AND SOUTH ASIA,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 1:30 p.m., in room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Steve Chabot (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. CHABOT. Good afternoon. This is the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the Foreign Affairs Committee. And the subject of our hearing today is "Safeguarding Israel's Security in a Volatile Region."

We started the hearing 30 minutes earlier than originally scheduled, and we appreciate the panel for being here to accommodate members who plan to attend a bipartisan briefing with Secretary Clinton and others at 3 o'clock o'clock this afternoon. And we may be interrupted by votes shortly as well. So we are going to try to get in as much as we can. I want to thank our witnesses for agreeing to come in a little early. I will try to keep my opening remarks a little shorter than usual. I will try to speak faster. And I hope that the witnesses will be willing to summarize their statements as best they can so that members will have time to ask questions.

I want to take a brief moment to make a comment about my colleague from New York, the ranking member, Mr. Ackerman. We are not sure what the future schedule of this subcommittee is for the remainder of this Congress, but barring any post-election activity, this may be the gentleman's last hearing in the Middle East and South Asia Subcommittee, a subcommittee, of course, that he chaired.

I have served with the gentleman on this subcommittee for a good part of my service in this body. And I have always enjoyed working with him. Sometimes I have even agreed with him. Some have said that the Congress has lost some of its real personalities from a bygone era. Well, I think it would be fair to say that my friend from New York is a real personality. [Laughter.]

He will be missed, won't he, Mr. Rohrabacher? And I hope he is not a stranger to these halls in the years to come. He certainly has been an asset to this institution and as much disagreement. We actually have gotten along quite well in this committee. And even when we disagree, we haven't been disagreeable about it. And he will be missed. And so the best of luck in whatever endeavors that

you may have in the future, Gary. And it has been an honor to serve with you.

It has been often said that Israel resides in a very tough neighborhood. And it has been evident in recent weeks and months that Israel's security situation continues to be threatened by what could be charitably called political instability in the region. Anti-Israel Islamist groups have had electoral success in neighboring nations, particularly in Egypt, a critical cog for a generation in the Arab-Israeli peace process.

And now Egypt's commitment to preserving stability in the Sinai is seriously in question. And its new leadership continues to send mixed signals about its intentions toward Israel.

The raging civil war in Syria threatens the stability of neighboring Lebanon, where Hezbollah, backed by the mullahs in Iran, is more than ready to capitalize. And most recently Islamist extremists have violently attacked American facilities in the region, destroying property, burning American flags, threatening lives, and in Syria murdering four of our finest Americans, whose only crime was trying to assist Libyans in securing the peace and promoting democracy and fundamental human rights in a nation only recently freed from decades of a brutal dictatorship.

Of course, since 2007, Gaza, with its notorious terror cells, has been governed by Hamas, a State Department-designated foreign terrorist organization whose charter calls for the obliteration of Israel. Thousands of rocket attacks against Israel have been launched from Gaza in the last decade. As recently as this summer, an estimated 65 Gaza-launched rockets rained in on Israel in a 3-day period. And today more weapons to be used against Israel continue to be smuggled into Gaza.

And, finally, the 700-pound gorilla in the room, as we all know, is the growing threat of nuclear-armed Iran, led by a tyrant who has called for the destruction of the State of Israel. As recently as last month, Iran celebrated its annual Quds Day, its annual state-sponsored protest against the existence of the State of Israel, an event held each year since the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Iran's supreme leader at the time said that Israel should be wiped off the map. And his hateful and dangerous rhetoric is still heard today.

Here is what Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad told the crowd dotted with "Death to Israel" and "Death to America" signs, "This was the day of unity among all human beings to remove the Zionist black stain from the human society." And that is the leader of Iran, who may well unless something is done to stop him have nuclear weapons in the very near future. And this is the Iranian leader we are supposed to trust when he says that Iran's nuclear intentions are peaceful.

At every turn, Iranian authorities have worked to thwart the effort of the International Atomic Energy Agency to investigate nuclear sites. IAEA investigators report that they have been unable to have access to their Fordow site built under a mountain near Qum, where an estimated 2,000 centrifuges have been installed and at the Parchin military installation near Teheran, where a suspected nuclear weapons-related project has been covered with shrouding.

Olli Heinonen, a former top IAEA inspector in a September 6 Wall street Journal article co-written with Simon Henderson from the Washington Institute for Near Eastern Policy, wrote, "Judging from this report, Iran seems to be determined to achieve the capability of producing nuclear materials suitable for nuclear weapons. Whether he has made a decision to produce a fully operational nuclear weapon is unclear." Not very reassuring.

As one who has always believed that Israel is our closest friend and ally in the Middle East, I have grown increasingly concerned over the last several months about the future of the U.S.-Israel security relationship.

From what some thought was the administration's clumsy response to the Palestinian attempt for statehood recognition last September at the U.N. to the most recent dust-ups concerning the status of Jerusalem in President Obama's campaign platform to the fact that he has, at least at this point, been unwilling to meet with the Prime Minister of Israel here in the United States, I fear we are sending conflicting messages, both to our friends and those of Israel's enemies who may question our resolve. I think that would be unfortunate and potentially dangerous. I hope it is not the case, but I fear that it is.

We have a distinguished panel of witnesses this afternoon who are well-versed on these issues and my colleagues and I look very much forward to hearing from them. And I will now yield 5 minutes to the ranking member, my friend from New York, Mr. Ackerman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much. First let me say thank you for your very kind comments. I am going to miss this place. I am going to miss this committee. I am going to miss you, Mr. Chairman, and so many of the members. Actually, I am going to miss all of the members that are here.

I have always found that Members of Congress don't get enough credit for being as thoughtful as most of us have been. And certainly some of the most thoughtful Members wind up on this full committee and specifically on our subcommittee. And while we have disagreements sometimes, not as much you and I maybe, but among some of the members, it is with the best intentions of approving American foreign policy and doing what is right in the interest of this country. And I am sure that is going to go on without me. And whatever field of endeavor I wind up in, I am sure that our paths are going to cross again.

Today the Middle East is a very different region than the one I first encountered as a new Member of Congress in 1983. Many of our longstanding relationships are now being recast, a democracy and Islam are being forced to engage each other as they never before have in the region. Instability and violence are now endemic in places that were once stable under the concrete blanket of repression. But the fundamentals of Israeli security have not significantly changed, even with these changes, as well as the transformations created by the Oslo peace process and the two Intifadas.

Israel's first and foundational security principle is that Israel must have the means to defend itself by itself. The self-reliance has always been at the heart of Israel's national identity and the ethos

of the Israel Defense Forces, and this sense of responsibility has not changed.

America's primary contributions are financial and strategic. Our assistance enables Israel to procure the defense equipment that it needs. And, by ensuring that Israel's defense capabilities are qualitatively better than potential adversaries, we make the conflict less likely. Maintaining Israel's qualitative military edge, or the QME, is not only an enduring American commitment but a clear self-interest as well.

Today, the threat of an Iranian nuclear capability looms over the entire region and because of the ayatollah regime's unceasing animosity toward Israel and to Jews, it poses a threat of special significance to the Jewish State. As Congress has wrestled with this issue over the years and through the course of several administrations, two points have become very clear to me. First, anyone genuinely committed to preventing Iran from crossing the threshold of nuclear weapons capability and avoiding war must support the most crushing, crippling, strangulating sanctions possible. Only sanctions severe enough to jeopardize the mullahs' grip on power can bring the ayatollahs to even consider ending their military nuclear program. And that is just a maybe.

Secondly, we have to stop playing with euphemisms and magical thinking. The time for referring to metaphorical tables set with options has passed. Likewise, trivializing the term "unacceptable" has to stop. When the President says—and he has—that it is unacceptable for Iran to have a nuclear weapon, what we are talking about, provided he is not bluffing and the Iranians do not change course, is sending our armed forces into Iran to attack and destroy key facilities, materials, and capabilities. There is a name for such a thing. It is called war, and we need to honestly face up to what it could cost us in lives, chaos, and cash because that is what averting the unacceptable may require.

As someone who truly believes that Iran must not be allowed to acquire a nuclear weapons capability, I think anyone who supposes that a strike on Iran will be surgical or a brief episode without severe consequences is delusional. And while the Iranian threat is of particular salience to Israel, anyone who thinks it is just Israel's problem needs to explain why Iran has expended such tremendous efforts to develop ballistic missiles with ranges well beyond that needed to reach Israel. A private conversation with some of our friends in the Gulf might also be useful in dispelling the myth that a nuclear Iran would change very little in the region already wracked with suspicion, instability, and religious tension. This is deadly serious business, and it needs to be treated as such.

At this point, both Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian peace processes are stagnant. I remain convinced, however, that for purely self-interested reasons, Israel needs to separate itself from the Palestinians and to normalize its relations with the Arab states. Common sense tells us that if you need to cut a deal, do it when you are strong and the other party is relatively weak. Regardless of future leadership, I can not foresee a scenario where Israel's current comparative advantages, militarily, technologically, demographically, economically, or political, would be as good as or better than they are now. And I have not heard as yet of any alternative

to two states that will sustain both Israel's democracy as well as its Jewish identity. Time might not be exactly ripe today, but I know that if you wait long enough, anything that is ripe will get rotten.

Generations of Israeli leaders have recognized American support for Israel as a vital national interest. In addition to the many billions in military assistance, the United States provides a unique diplomatic shield and leadership in the international community. Moreover, while there is no formal mutual defense treaty, which is an Israeli preference, it should be noted, American leaders have long let it be known that any threat to Israel's survival would be a matter of the gravest concern for the United States, which substantially enhances Israel's own deterrent capabilities.

For as long as Israeli leaders have recognized that their special relationship with the United States is truly a vital national interest, they have recognized that it is essential for American support to be bipartisan. Israeli leaders, regardless of party, have recognized this need and have consistently restated that position.

Sadly, American politics has changed, and Israel's American support is challenged by entities openly and aggressively seeking to make Israel a wedge issue in American politics.

The most insidious of these efforts involve characterizing as anti-Israel some options that, while different from Israel's current government, even though those American opinions easily fit within the spectrum of Israel's own Zionist parties, agreeing with Ahmadinejad is anti-Israel. Agreeing with Kadima or Labor is banal. If unchecked, I fear these smear campaigns will not take long to poison the well of bipartisan support that Israel has justifiably and critically relied upon.

I am all in favor, to be sure, of Democrats and Republicans competing to highlight their support for Israel. And for more than three decades in politics, I am well aware that neither campaigns nor public office are meant for the thin-skinned. But feckless Israeli appeals for restraint from those intent on making Israel an election-year football are insufficient. If the bipartisan nature of American support is, as they say, a truly vital national interest, then more needs to be done. Israel's leaders should carefully consider whether those responsible for these wedge campaigns need to be publicly condemned and if they persist, isolated from Israel's decision-makers.

There are serious challenges facing the region and our two nations, most notably, Iran's drive to acquire nuclear weapons, which absolutely must be prevented. But unless we look after the fundamentals of our relationship, this challenge as well as many others will be made much harder than necessary.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much. The gentleman yields back.

It is the preference of the committee to recognize members for 1 minute if they would like to make a statement. The gentleman from California, Mr. Rohrabacher, is recognized.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Yes. And one personality to the other, it has been a pleasure kibitzing with you all of this time.

One question that is clear today. And people want to ask it, and they say, "Should we ask this about foreign policy and other poli-

cies? Are we better off than we were 4 years ago. I think the answer, are we better off in the Middle East? Is peace more likely? Is Israel more secure? Is the United States more likely to have a good relationship with the countries in the Middle East?" The answer is no. We are not better off today than we were 4 years ago. Whatever political implications that has, let's face reality.

We have been for the last 4 years treating our friends like enemies and our enemies like friends. And then everybody sounds and acts really surprised when that creates a great destabilization. And that is what we have experienced in the last 4 years, not a destabilization leading to more prosperity and a better life for the people but, instead, a destabilization that has led to radicalism and a more likely chance of conflict in that region.

I am looking forward to reading your testimony. I am going to be running in and out for the next 1½ hours or so. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

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

The gentleman from New York is recognized if he would like to make a statement.

Mr. TURNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Last week's events in the Middle East and Africa underline the vitriol that America is facing and a sad reminder of the state of affairs. For a long time, Iran has made its intentions clear to eliminate Israel and to destroy American interests abroad. Violent anti-American, anti-Israeli demonstrations have continued throughout the Middle East and Asia. And while the administration blamed the violence on a movie, it has now recanted that, in fact, it was a well-planned terrorist attack.

Last week's attacks and uprisings are not isolated events based on a movie. The underpinnings of these attacks are part of an overarching terrorist philosophy, which lays dormant but never quite goes away. They represent a threat to the United States and our close ally Israel. And I am looking forward to expert testimony in this regard.

Thank you.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much.

The gentleman from Nebraska is recognized for 1 minute.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing to discuss Israel's security situation at a difficult time of transition throughout the Middle East. We would like to all see a stable and prosperous outcome for the people of this region. And the security of our ally Israel is essential to achieving that overarching goal.

There are so many developments and points of concern lately that it is difficult in order to know where to begin, Mr. Chairman, but many of the complicated dimensions of the region's security situation have a common denominator. And that is the Country of Iran.

The civil war in Syria, where the Assad government is closely allied to its patriot in Teheran, poses serious international security as well as profoundly grave humanitarian concerns.

After years of outreach by the United States and other nations, the quest to find a diplomatic solution to the security threat posed by Iran's controversial nuclear program remains elusive. The pro-

gram continues to advance, despite multiple rounds of international sanctioned. And, in tandem, Iran's regime persists in using hostile rhetoric, posing an international and one must assume credible existential threat to Israel as well as regional stability in the well-being of people throughout the area.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much.

And the Chair will now introduce the panel. And then we are going to have to head over for votes. And we will try to get back here right after the votes and get in the testimony then and questions because we do have a briefing that I think most of us want to attend.

I will start with Elliott Abrams, who is a senior fellow for Middle Eastern studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, served as Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Adviser in the administration of George W. Bush, where he supervised U.S. policy in the Middle East for the White House. Prior to that position, Mr. Abrams spent 4 years working for the United States Senate and served in the State Department during the Reagan administration. In 1988, Mr. Abrams received the Secretary of State's distinguished service award from Secretary George P. Shultz for his work in the State Department. Mr. Abrams was educated at Harvard College, the London School of Economics, and Harvard Law School. And we welcome you here this afternoon, Mr. Abrams.

Next we will have James Phillips, who is the senior research fellow for Middle Eastern affairs at the Douglas and Sarah Allison Center for Foreign Policy Studies at the Heritage Foundation. He is a former research fellow at the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress and a former joint doctoral research fellow at the East-West Center. He also is a member of the Board of Editors of Middle East Quarterly, the leading conservative journal of Middle Eastern Policy Studies. We welcome you here this afternoon, Mr. Phillips.

And last, but not least, is Ambassador Martin S. Indyk. Martin S. Indyk is vice president and director of the Foreign Policy Program at The Brookings Institution. He served as U.S. Ambassador to Israel from 1995 to '97 and from 2000 to 2001. Mr. Indyk served as Special Assistant to President Clinton and Senior Director for Near East and South Asian Affairs at the National Security Council from '93 to '95 and Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs in the U.S. Department of State '97 through 2000. Before entering U.S. Government, Mr. Indyk was founding executive director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy for 8 years. Ambassador Indyk received a bachelor's degree in economics from Sydney University and a Ph.D. from the Australian National University. We welcome you here this afternoon, Mr. Ambassador.

So, as I indicated, we have to head over for votes. That is what the buzzers were about there. And so as soon as votes are over, we will be back and take your testimony and ask questions.

And at this point, we are in recess.

[Brief recess.]

Mr. CHABOT. The subcommittee will come back to order. I know Mr. Ackerman will be here shortly and probably other members as

well. We do have a briefing at 3 o'clock o'clock I know that a lot of us are interested in. So we are going to get right to the panel. We will begin with Mr. Abrams. You are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ABRAMS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is a pleasure to be here.

I would like to submit my written testimony for the record.

Mr. CHABOT. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. ABRAMS. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ELLIOTT ABRAMS, SENIOR FELLOW, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. ABRAMS. Israel's security, as you mentioned in your remarks, is under threat today. Just stand in Israel and look around north to the turmoil in Syria; concerns about the future of Jordan, recent demonstrations there; the situation in Egypt and in Sinai, where there has been great disorder; and, of course, the Iranian nuclear program. Seen from Jerusalem, I think the region appears to be much more dangerous than it did just a few years ago.

I think there are three key elements to safeguarding Israel's security in this new context. The first is the military edge, the qualitative military edge. And I think this is the part where things are looking pretty good. U.S.-Israel military and intelligence cooperation have been very good for years. And it remains very good. The President frequently says this. And I think it is a fair comment. That cooperation is excellent.

The problem I have is that I think that the administration believes that is the end of the story. If you have good military and intelligence cooperation, that is it. Israel's security is safeguarded. It isn't because I think the second element of safeguarding Israel's security is maintaining excellent political and personal cooperation between the Government of Israel and the Government of the United States.

But our political and personal relations are not good. In fact, they are worse than they have been for many years and, arguably, for two decades. The problem, in part, is that that military and intelligence cooperation is secret and invisible while the political distancing and the political arguments and confrontations are very visible, including to Iran. A part of the problem is that this distancing is a deliberate policy on the part of the administration. There is a very famous incident involving the head of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations early in the administration, who said that he feared that there would be some daylight and that there didn't use to be any daylight and the President's reply was under Bush, there was no daylight, but there was also no progress, a remark that I think is unfair, but it does I think reflect the administration's view that perhaps Israel and we would be better off with more distance. Of course, I think we have seen that distance, and I think it is very unfortunate because in the Middle East, that distance is perceived as a source of Israeli weakness. And we have seen this distancing not only in the relationship between, unfortunately, the Prime Minister and the President but other things.

For example, I remember last year the administration finally vetoed a U.N. Security Council resolution on settlements, but then

the U.S. delegate delivered an explanation of vote that was really an attack on Israel, February 18th, 2011. That kind of distancing is noticed. And, of course, the distancing on Iran is also noticed between the United States and Israel, where we seem to have very different views.

I would think a good way to judge it is what is in the mind of the people running the Iranian regime. The people running the Iranian regime are not scared. They have moved forward with their nuclear weapons program at least since 2003 without a pause, enriching more uranium, running more centrifuges in more locations, including the underground one at Fordow, so enriched uranium, centrifuges, testing more missiles, working on the warhead. They are obviously not afraid of us. The messaging that they have gotten so far does not lead them to suspend this program.

Very briefly, the third element I think of safeguarding Israel's security is a strong policy on our part in fostering moderate regimes in the Arab countries that have gone through the Arab Spring.

It was only in July that Secretary Clinton visited Cairo. Much of the Coptic leadership would not meet with her. And there was a demonstration against her by Egyptians who felt we were favoring the Muslim Brotherhood, we have got to give up the fight, and we are abandoning secular Egyptians, Centras, Copts. That is their view. That is at least bad messaging, but I think it also really threatens Israel's security if we are not very much in the struggle against radical and Islamist governments in the neighboring countries.

I am out of time, Mr. Chairman. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Abrams follows:]

COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS

September 20, 2012

Safeguarding Israel's Security in a Volatile Region

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

Before the
House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia
United States House of Representatives
2nd Session, 112th Congress

Hearing on "Safeguarding Israel's Security in a Volatile Region"

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee once again. The subject of this hearing is an important and timely one.

The volatility of the Middle East has been evident in the last two years and indeed in the last two weeks. Look at the scene for a moment from the Israeli perspective:

- To the north, Syria is in the midst of a civil war and foreign jihadi forces have arrived from all over the Islamic world. Even when Assad falls, no one can really say what they will do: go home, or stay and seek new targets such as Israel. And the chaos in Syria can easily infect Lebanon, where there is already violence connected to the Syrian conflict.

- To the south, Egypt's fate is uncertain. TheMuslim Brotherhood government failed to protect the U.S. Embassy from attack and its new president has never apologized for that attack. Egypt's willingness to restore order in the Sinai and prevent terrorist attacks on Israel from there is much in doubt. According to *The Times of Israel*, just last Friday "the headquarters of the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in the Sinai was attacked. Dozens of gunmen, in some 50 vehicles, surrounded

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the base and then 60-70 of them burst in, storming into the base amid heavy gunfire." And of course, Hamas remains in control of Gaza.

- To the east there is unrest, including frequent and occasionally violent demonstrations in both the West Bank and Jordan.

- Even more dangerously, Iran moves closer and closer to a nuclear weapons capability. It continues to design warheads, improve its missiles, and spin centrifuges, adding every month to its store of enriched uranium—some of it enriched to 20 percent or higher. The P5+1 negotiations are going nowhere, and the economic and financial sanctions have managed to damage Iran's economy but have not managed to slow its nuclear program.

When seen from Jerusalem the region seems like a far more dangerous place than it was a few years ago. Everywhere Islamist groups are on the rise, and they have won elections in Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt. No one can say with any certainty, today, whether the overthrow of dictators in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt, and hopefully soon in Syria, will lead to stable and moderate democratic governments, even in the middle or long run, or to Islamist regimes determined to confront Israel and the United States.

In my view, there are three key elements to safeguarding Israel's security in this context.

The ***first*** is maintaining Israel's own military edge. Israel has the main responsibility for this but we are a critical part of the picture as well, through our military and intelligence cooperation and our military aid. This part of the picture is, I believe, in very good shape. The Administration claims that defense cooperation and intelligence sharing and cooperation are better than ever and I have no reason to doubt that. It was terrific under Presidents Clinton and Bush, and is terrific now. The problem, from my point of view, is that the Administration thinks that is the end of the story.

It is not—because the ***second*** element to safeguarding Israel's security is maintaining excellent political and personal cooperation between the United State and Israel. But our political relationship and cooperation are worse than they have been for many years, perhaps for two decades. And while our military and intel cooperation are largely secret and invisible, our political confrontations are *very* visible and known to all.

I believe that this political distancing from Israel is a deliberate policy on the part of the Administration, which thought that the Bush Administration had gotten too close. In 2009 the head of a leading Jewish organization told the President that diplomatic progress in the Middle East most often occurred when there was no daylight between the positions of the United States and Israel, and said this had been the Bush policy. Mr. Obama pushed back, and said that for eight years there had been no daylight—but also no progress.

My point is not that Mr. Obama was right or wrong in that assessment—and of course I think he was completely wrong—but that this was and presumably is his genuine view. He thought we and even perhaps Israel would be better off with more distance between us.

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But in the Middle East that distance is perceived as a source of Israeli weakness. When we try to wriggle out of vetoing UN Security Council resolutions, under any president, the Arab states immediately take notice. When our vetoes are followed by explanations of vote that are filled with frustration at Israel, they take notice again. When our newspapers report that the relationship between the prime minister and the president is hostile and bitter; that the president refused to dine with the prime minister, or refused a photo with him, or most recently refused to agree to meet with him at the UN this month, Israel's security is harmed. And this is true even when military and intel relations are excellent.

I confess, Mr. Chairman, that I do not at all understand our approach when it comes to the Iranian nuclear program, which is a great and indeed existential threat to Israel. We want a negotiated solution, an end to the Iranian nuclear weapons program through diplomacy. I would have thought it obvious, by now for sure, that the diplomacy and the sanctions thus far employed have had no impact on that program. They have not slowed it down. Iran has changed its critical national security policies only twice since 1979: when the Ayatollah Khomeini decided to end the Iran-Iraq war in 1988, and when Iran apparently decided to suspend its nuclear warhead design activities in 2003, under Ayatollah Khamenei, after the U.S. invasion of Iraq. In both cases the policy change came due to fear of military defeat and its potential to threaten regime survival.

So it seems clear that if the sanctions and diplomacy are to work, a military threat must also be part of the picture. But we have done everything we can to diminish and undercut the Israeli military threat against Iran. Senior officials such as Sec. Panetta and Gen. Dempsey have repeatedly made statements that suggest Israel has little capacity to damage Iran's program, that there should in any event be no attack for many months to come, and that the outcome of any attack would be chaos in the region. In addition there is Gen. Dempsey's recent remark that he did not want to "complicit" in any Israeli action. I am at a loss to understand why it is useful to say these things publicly, because they seem to me tell Iran its program can go forward with no current risk.

Earlier this year the Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen. Norton Schwartz, told reporters something a bit different. Asked about U.S. capabilities, he replied "What we can do, you wouldn't want to be in the area." That strikes me as the kind of messaging far more likely to convey our firmness and our power, and I wish all the public messaging were equally tough. If there is any chance of a negotiated resolution, it seems to me that it will come only if and when the Iranian leaders are scared—scared that if they do not stop their program they will be subjected to a devastating attack. Today, they certainly do not act as if they are scared, of Israel or of us. The constant public disputes between Israel and the United States, and the obvious White House denigration of Israel's prime minister, certainly do not help Israel's security.

The ***third*** element in safeguarding Israel's security is, in my view, a strong American policy of fostering the development of stable democracies in the Arab Spring countries. It is obvious that Israel is endangered if those countries, starting with Egypt, become dominated by Islamists, while Israel's security is protected if stable, moderate governments are in power. Ultimately that is up to the people of those countries, of course—but we have a role to play. I believe our role is to support the liberals, moderates, secularists, and democrats to the extent we can and the extent they think is useful. I don't believe we're doing that now. Instead I think we are taking too soft a line with the Islamist governments and parties, and abandoning those whose views are much closer to our own.

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Remember, Mr. Chairman, that when Sec. Clinton went to Egypt in July, there were demonstrations against her by the liberal and moderate groups, and much of the Christian leadership refused to meet with her. Whether that was wise or unwise, their perception is that they are being abandoned while we seek better relations with Islamist and Brotherhood groups. Just to take one example, it is a fact that Egypt's president Morsi has for many years denied that al Qaeda is responsible for the 9/11 attacks. And just two months ago Brotherhood leaders were quoted to the same effect. In last Saturday's *Washington Post*, Robert Satloff reminded us that Mustafa Ghoneimy, head of the Muslim Brotherhood's Guidance Office, said "the Jews" had executed the attacks. "So many Jews worked in these two towers, and on that day, they were off." Meanwhile, the Brotherhood's secretary general Mahmoud Hussein said "one of the intelligence services in America, or the Jews" had conducted the attacks. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/getting-egypts-morsi-to-give-up-911-conspiracy-rhetoric/2012/09/11/4ca304ca-fb97-11e1-8adc-499661afe377_story.html]

Yet an American official delegation was sent to Egypt in August to negotiate the forgiveness of one billion dollars in debt owed to the United States, and the President was apparently going to meet Mr. Morsi at the UN without any demand that such comments be denounced.

Mr. Chairman, it is clear and I want to repeat once more that we cannot determine the outcome of political developments in Arab countries newly freed from dictatorships. But we can stand up for the folks who stand up for us, and assist them, and show them real solidarity. We can stand up for our own principles and values, and make it clear that the new governments can allow Islamist groups to run amok or they can have a good relationship with us, but they cannot have both.

Does this affect Israel's security? I believe it does, because an Egypt or Tunisia or Libya that tries to move toward liberty under law, that places limits of the Islamists' actions and punishes violence and criminal activity, is far more likely to evolve toward a responsible state with which we can have a sustainable and even close relationship, and which will not permit itself to become a haven for violent or terrorist activity against Israel.

So I believe that the United States has, in the last several years, pursued a constricted, narrow approach to safeguarding Israel's security. We have acted as if military and intelligence cooperation is all that is needed, and as if when such cooperation is occurring no other element of U.S. policy is consequential. I believe that policy is wrong and has damaged Israel's security and our own influence, our friends, and our security interests in the Middle East.

Mr. Chairman, I welcome any questions or comments members of the Subcommittee may wish to address to me.

Thank you.

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Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much.

And next we will go to Mr. Phillips for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF MR. JAMES PHILLIPS, SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW FOR MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS, THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Mr. PHILLIPS. I would like to thank the chairman, members of the committee for this opportunity to testify.

Israel faces many threats to its security, but I would like to focus in on——

Mr. CHABOT. Could you pull that mike a little bit closer?

Mr. PHILLIPS. Okay.

Mr. CHABOT. It will just make folks in the room a little easier to hear.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Okay. And in my written testimony, which I would like to submit for the record, I covered some of these other threats, but in my oral statement, I would like to focus on the Iranian nuclear threat, which I think is the most critical long-term threat to Israel.

Although sanctions have imposed an increasingly steep price on Teheran, sanctions alone are unlikely to halt Iran's nuclear push any more than they halted North Korea's. Only sanctions backed by the credible threat of the use of force are likely to dissuade Teheran from continuing on its nuclear path.

Yet, the administration continues to stress its commitment to open-ended diplomacy and reluctance to use the military option. Although administration officials dutifully have repeated that all options are on the table, they frequently have gone out of their way to publicly devalue the prospects for success of a U.S. military strike and, to make matters worse, have publicly warned against an Israeli military strike.

This counterproductive behavior only reduces the chances of resolving the problem satisfactorily through diplomacy because it reduces international leverage on Teheran. By reducing the perceived likelihood of a preventive military attack, the administration lowers Iran's perceived costs for continuing its nuclear efforts. And that ultimately increases the chance of war in my estimation, either to prevent Iran from attaining a nuclear capability or, worse yet, after it does so.

Both Jerusalem and Washington have publicly aired their differences on Iran, with the administration warning that an Israeli preventive strike would be premature and destabilizing while the Israeli Government has signaled that it can't wait much longer. These increasingly public spats reveal I think a glaring lack of trust.

President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu need to forge a common understanding of how best to defuse Iran's ticking nuclear time bomb and present Teheran with a credible military threat to dissuade it from continuing. Absent such a common understanding, I think it is increasingly likely that Israel will go it alone and launch a preventive strike.

Instead of pressuring Israel to refrain from an attack, I think the administration would be better focused on bringing maximum pressure to bear on Iran. And, therefore, I would have four rec-

ommendations: First, make every effort to present a common front against Iran.

And here I think the White House's rejection of Prime Minister Netanyahu's request to meet with the President next week during his trip to the U.S. has deepened doubts about whether the administration will take timely action to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear capability. The President should adjust his schedule and meet with the Prime Minister to hear out his concerns and address them forthrightly. I think ruling out a meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu sends an unfortunate and dangerous signal to Iran that Washington may not be serious about halting its nuclear weapons program.

Secondly, I think the administration should demonstrate a greater resolve in halting that program. The administration's mantra that every option is on the table has become increasingly stale and unconvincing, not only to Israel but to Iran. So I think the President should clarify in a public statement that he will actually use the military option, if necessary, not just leave it on the table. And this will help ease Israeli concerns and put greater pressure on Teheran.

Thirdly, Washington also needs to set strict conditions on any last-ditch diplomatic talks. This would help alleviate concerns that the administration would paint itself into a corner by entering into open-ended diplomatic talks that allow Teheran to run out the clock.

My last recommendation is that the administration should recognize Israel's right to take military action in anticipatory self-defense. Instead of sniping at the idea of an Israeli preventive strike, I think it should acknowledge Israel's right to take action against what it regards to be an existential threat. This would increase pressure on Teheran and disabuse it of any notion that it could depend on Washington to restrain Jerusalem. The U.S. does not have the power to guarantee that Israel would not be attacked by a nuclear Iran in the future. So it should not betray the trust of an ally by tieing its hands now. Although an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear program would entail increased risks for the U.S., these risks would be dwarfed by the threats posed by a nuclear-armed Iran.

I think the bottom line is that Iran defiantly continues to enrich uranium; issue threats; and order terrorist attacks, including a terrorist attack here in Washington, DC. If Teheran is willing to risk such a terrorist attack before it gains nuclear weapons, what threats is it likely to pose after it attains nuclear weapons? And I think that the U.S., Israel, and our other allies can't afford to wait and find out.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Phillips follows:]

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CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

Safeguarding Israel's Security in a Volatile Region

Testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs,
Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia

James Phillips
Senior Research Fellow for Middle Eastern Affairs
Douglas and Sarah Allison Center for Foreign Policy Studies
The Heritage Foundation

September 20, 2012

My name is James Phillips. I am the Senior Research Fellow for Middle Eastern Affairs at The Heritage Foundation. The views I express in this testimony are my own, and should not be construed as representing any official position of The Heritage Foundation.

Israel faces a wide spectrum of threats to its security. Many Arab and Muslim countries do not recognize Israel's very existence and continue to work for its destruction. These rejectionist forces support terrorist groups such as Hezbollah, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which have mounted a protracted war of attrition against the Jewish state.

The uprisings against authoritarian regimes in the course of the so-called "Arab Spring" have empowered Islamist political parties and created power vacuums that Islamist extremists have exploited to advance their hostile agenda. For example, the ouster of the Mubarak regime has undermined the authority of Egypt's central government and allowed disgruntled Bedouin tribes, Islamist militants and smuggling networks to grow stronger and bolder in Egypt's Sinai peninsula. Egyptian and Palestinian Islamist extremists have exploited the anarchy to launch terrorist attacks against Israel from the Sinai, in an effort to provoke Egyptian-Israeli clashes.

Although the uprising in Syria has undermined the potential military threat posed by the Assad regime to Israel, it also could motivate the Assad regime to seek a confrontation with Israel to boost its declining popular legitimacy. Moreover, if the Assad regime implodes, its huge chemical weapons arsenal could fall into the hands of terrorist groups that could pose new challenges to Israel's long term security.

But the greatest threat to Israel's security currently comes from Iran, whose radical Islamist leaders have repeatedly called for Israel's destruction. Iran has made steady progress in its nuclear weapons effort and already has ballistic missiles capable of targeting Israel. Implacable hostility to Israel is a key pillar of the Tehran regime's harsh ideology and an important aspect of its foreign policy. Tehran has trumpeted its hostility to Israel to gain Arab allies, boost its claim to leadership in the Muslim world, outflank moderate Arab rivals and undermine the United States in the Middle East.

Clashing views on Iran's nuclear threat

For Iran's radical regime, hostility to Israel, sometimes referred to as the "little Satan", is second only to hostility to the United States, which the leader of Iran's 1979 revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, dubbed the "great Satan." But Iran poses a greater immediate threat to Israel than to the United States, since Israel is a smaller country with less military capabilities located much closer to Iran.

These geostrategic differences have given the United States and Israel differing perspectives on Iran's potential nuclear threat. Israel is more vulnerable to Iranian ballistic missiles and terrorist threats from Iranian-supported Lebanese and Palestinian groups on its northern and southern borders. It also has less military capabilities than the

United States that could be used in a long distance preventive strike against Iran's nuclear facilities.

This disparity in military capabilities means that Israel has a smaller window of opportunity in which to launch a preventive strike against Iran's nuclear weapons program before it is too late to effectively set it back for a significant period of time. For example, Iran's uranium enrichment activities are soon expected to shift increasingly to the Fordo facility, which is much more difficult to destroy than other facilities because it is buried under a mountain near the holy city of Qum. Israel lacks the huge bunker-busting bombs needed to penetrate the concrete and rock that shields the Fordo facility.

These differences in military capabilities give the two allies differing perceptions about the urgency of considering the use of force as a last resort. For Jerusalem, the clock is moving towards a decision point that is much closer than for Washington, which can afford to wait longer due to its greater military capabilities. Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak warned in March that Iran is rapidly approaching the point at which the size, redundancy and hardening of its nuclear infrastructure would produce a "zone of immunity" in which an Israeli strike would lose its effectiveness.

Disagreements over Iran policy also have been magnified because President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu have clashing world views and poor personal chemistry. The two leaders have starkly different perceptions of Iran's evolving nuclear threat and how best to confront it.

Prime Minister Netanyahu understandably perceives the Iranian nuclear program to be an existential threat to Israel and is determined to prevent another Holocaust, through military means if necessary. President Obama, who consistently has underestimated the ideologically-based hostility of Iran's Islamist dictatorship, puts much more faith in a strategy of diplomacy backed by sanctions. Therefore, the Obama Administration has exhibited a much weaker sense of urgency on the need to deal decisively with Iran's potential nuclear threat.

While the Obama Administration came into office pledging to impose "crippling sanctions" on Iran, it delayed efforts to ratchet up sanctions until after the failure of its initial push for multilateral talks with Iran on the nuclear issue. The administration also opposed and sought to dilute several bipartisan congressional efforts to escalate sanctions, including sanctions on Iran's central bank, which the president reluctantly signed into law in December.[1]

Although sanctions have imposed an increasingly steep price on Tehran, sanctions alone are unlikely to halt Iran's nuclear push any more than they halted North Korea's. Only sanctions backed by the credible threat of the use of force are likely to dissuade Tehran from continuing on its nuclear path. Iran in fact did freeze its nuclear program in 2003

[1] See: James Phillips, "Congress Should Reject the Obama Administration's Efforts to Weaken Iran Sanctions," Heritage Foundation Web Memo No. 3432, December 13, 2011, at: http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/12/reject-efforts-to-weaken-iran-sanctions

after the Bush Administration presented such a credible threat by invading Iraq and overthrowing Saddam Hussein when he failed to live up to his obligations to destroy his prohibited missiles and weapons of mass destruction programs. Libya's Muammar Qadhafi also gave up his nuclear and chemical weapons programs when he thought that he might be the next target.

But the Obama Administration remains committed to its failed engagement strategy and may revive the comatose P5-plus-1 talks (the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council plus Germany) with Iran on the nuclear issue, which Tehran has repeatedly sabotaged in the past. The administration continues to stress its commitment to open-ended diplomacy and reluctance to use the military option. Although administration officials dutifully have indicated that "all options are on the table," they frequently have gone out of their way to publicly devalue the prospects for success of a U.S. or Israeli military strike.

To make matters worse, various administration officials, including the Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have publicly warned against an Israeli military strike. This counterproductive behavior only reduces the chances of resolving the problem satisfactorily through diplomacy because it reduces international leverage on Tehran. By reducing the perceived likelihood of a preventive military attack, the Obama Administration lowers Iran's perceived costs for continuing its nuclear efforts. That ultimately increases the chances of war, either to prevent Iran from attaining a nuclear capability, or worse yet, after it does so.

Both governments have publicly aired their differences on Iran, with the Obama Administration warning that an Israeli preventive strike would be premature and destabilizing, while Netanyahu's government has signaled that it can't wait much longer. Netanyahu repeatedly has warned that diplomacy and sanctions have failed to stop Iran's accelerating uranium enrichment program and that stronger action is needed to sway Iran by clearly warning Tehran that continued nuclear defiance will trigger preventive military action.

The Obama Administration has rejected this advice. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton pointedly said on September 9th that "We're not setting deadlines." A disappointed Netanyahu subsequently retorted that "those in the international community who refuse to draw a red line on Iran have no moral right to draw a red line for Israel."

Finding Common Ground

The increasingly public spats reveal a glaring lack of trust. The Obama Administration's "lead from behind" approach has fueled Israeli anxiety about being left behind if Washington fails to follow through on its vague promises to take military action to prevent Iran from attaining a nuclear weapon. Many Israelis are skeptical about the Obama Administration's willingness to use force if diplomacy fails.

President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu need to forge a common understanding of how best to defuse Iran's ticking nuclear time bomb and present Tehran with a credible military threat to dissuade it from continuing on its current nuclear path. Absent such a common understanding, I think it is increasingly likely that Israel will go it alone and launch a preventive attack.

Instead of pressuring Israel to refrain from an attack, the Obama Administration should be focused on bringing maximum pressure to bear on Iran. Therefore the United States should:

Make every effort to present a common front against Iran. To a large degree, the rising tensions between Washington and Jerusalem stem from deep-seated Israeli doubts about whether the Obama Administration will take timely action to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear capability. The White House's rejection of Netanyahu's request to meet with the president next week during his trip to the United States has only deepened these doubts. The president should readjust his schedule and meet with Netanyahu, hear out his concerns and address them forthrightly. He must convince Netanyahu that he is absolutely determined to deny Iran a nuclear capability and will resort to military force if necessary. Ruling out a meeting with Netanyahu sends a dangerous signal to Iran that Washington may not be serious about halting its nuclear weapons program.

Demonstrate resolve in halting Iran's nuclear weapons program. The administration's mantra, "every option is on the table," has become increasingly stale and unconvincing, not only to Israel but to Iran. The Netanyahu government is unlikely to agree to forego a strike in self defense unless it has ironclad guarantees that the Obama Administration will take decisive military action before it is too late. The president should clarify in a public statement that he will actually use the military option if necessary, not just leave it on the table. This would help ease Israeli concerns and put the onus on Tehran to halt enrichment efforts. The administration also must make the investments in the U.S. military that conspicuously demonstrate that the United States has a robust military capability to protect its vital interests in the region and act in defense of its allies.

Set strict conditions on any last-ditch diplomatic talks. Prime Minister Netanyahu is concerned that the Obama Administration will paint itself into a corner by entering into open-ended diplomatic talks that allow Tehran to "run out the clock" while it finishes building a nuclear weapons capability. A key issue therefore will be setting an acceptable timeframe for conducting the P5-plus-1 talks, if they are to resume with Iran. Washington should assure Israel that if talks resume it will publicly fix a hard deadline for obtaining concrete results. Failing to set a deadline would allow Tehran to use the ongoing talks as diplomatic cover to stave off a preventive strike until it is too late to stop its nuclear ambitions.

Recognize Israel's right to take military action in anticipatory self defense. Instead of sniping at the idea of an Israeli preventive strike, the Obama Administration should

acknowledge Israel's right to take action against what it regards as an existential threat.[2] This would increase the pressure on Tehran and disabuse it of any notion that it can depend on Washington to restrain Israel. The U.S. does not have the power to guarantee that Israel would not be attacked by a nuclear Iran in the future, so it should not betray the trust of an ally by tying its hands now. Although an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear program would entail increased risks for U.S. interests in the Middle East, these risks would be dwarfed by the threats posed by a nuclear-armed Iran. Moreover, a nuclear Iran would induce many other Middle Eastern states to seek their own nuclear weapons. This cascade of nuclear proliferation would enormously increase the risks of future nuclear threats to the United States, Israel and other allies.

The Bottom Line

To mitigate the threat posed by Iran's drive for nuclear weapons, the United States must proactively set a clear red line on Iran's nuclear program and enforce it. It should stand shoulder to shoulder with Israel in confronting Iran's growing nuclear menace. If Jerusalem decides to exercise its right of self-defense, then the U.S. should support that decision, not condemn it.

The Islamist dictatorship in Tehran has been given ample warning that its longstanding violations of its legal obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty will have a progressively heavy cost, yet it defiantly continues to enrich uranium, issue threats, and order terrorist attacks, including one plot to bomb a restaurant in Washington, D.C.

If Iran is willing to risk such an attack before it gains nuclear weapons, what threats is it likely to pose after it attains nuclear weapons? The United States, Israel and other allies cannot afford to find out

[2] See: James Phillips and James Jay Carafano, "If Israel Attacks," Heritage Foundation Web Memo No. 3487, February 6, 2012 at: http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/02/us-policy-on-israels-potential-attack-on-iran

James Phillips is the Senior Research Fellow for Middle Eastern Affairs at the Douglas and Sarah Allison Center for Foreign Policy Studies at the Heritage Foundation. He is a veteran international security specialist who has written extensively on Middle Eastern affairs and international terrorism since 1978. He is a former Research Fellow at the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress and a former Joint Doctoral Research Fellow at the East-West Center. He also is a member of the Board of Editors of *Middle East Quarterly*, the leading conservative journal of Middle Eastern policy studies.

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Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much.

And, Ambassador Indyk, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Ambassador INDYK. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for having this hearing.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE MARTIN S. INDYK, DIRECTOR, SABAN CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY, THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

Ambassador INDYK. I think we can all agree that Israel's security survival and well-being is of paramount interest of the United States. And we can all agree that Iran poses a great threat to that objective and that paramount interest of the United States. But, starting from that common ground, I will tend to differ with the other speakers here in terms of some of the things that they have said.

I have outlined in my written testimony essentially the key elements of Israel's deteriorating security situation. And, as my friend Elliott Abrams has outlined, it is a very disturbing picture on all of Israel's borders that I have laid out there.

On the other hand, there are factors that should also be put into the balance when one looks at Israel's situation. It is, by far, the strongest military power in the Middle East. And its strength derives in good part from the bipartisan support that the Congress has provided for Israel over many decades and the support that successive administrations, both Republican and Democrat, have provided. And that is no less the case, as Elliott has suggested, than for the Obama administration.

And the President, notwithstanding this approach of his in the early years of his administration, of seeking to distance the United States from Israel in order to carry some favor with the Arabs, a theory of the case that I believe was fundamentally mistaken, but, nevertheless, while doing that, he made absolutely clear, publicly and privately, that he was completely committed and steadfast in his commitment to Israel's security and did a whole range of things, both visible and in the covert realm, to manifest that commitment, to the point where you have former Prime Minister, now Defense Minister Ehud Barak declaring just last year that the relationship between the United States and Israel on the strategic level is better now than he can remember.

And it is all realms, in qualitative military edge, in intelligence cooperation, in strategic cooperation, and coordination. And it includes cooperation and coordination on the common threat that Iran poses to Israel and to the United States. And that cooperation recently revealed in a book by David Singer on the covert level also extends to extraordinarily close coordination on how to deal with Iran.

Channels have been established for that coordination between national security advisers meeting on a monthly basis, between the Secretary of State and her counterpart, between the Secretary of Defense, between the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and his counterparts. And this has gone on for years now. And I think there is a high degree of coordination and a high degree of comfort between the two governments in terms of common strategy.

The differences that arise are differences that I believe are generated more by the structure of the situation than they are by personalities. The structure of the situation is such that Israel is threatened on a regular basis with annihilation by Iran. Iran cannot threaten the United States with annihilation. Israel's margin for security is much less than the United States, our thousands of nuclear weapons and our distance from Iran. Israel lives in Iran's neighborhood. And Israel's particular history as the Jewish state that was once destroyed and its people that once were almost destroyed lead it to be particularly sensitive about such threats and particularly sensitive about capabilities that might back up those threats.

So, as Iran draws closer to the nuclear threshold, Israel is inevitably going to be more nervous than the United States. The United States, after all, lives with nuclear weapons from Pakistan or China, North Korea. Israel could not live in Iran with nuclear weapons. And I think that that is understood.

The President has been very clear in his commitment, which, again, I think is a bipartisan commitment, that Iran will not be allowed to acquire nuclear weapons. He has built a military capability and deployed it to ensure that that will not happen. And I think that there is every reason to believe that the President is serious in that commitment that he has Israel's back.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Indyk follows:]

Testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee
Sub-Committee on the Middle East and South Asia
on

"Safeguarding Israel's Security in a Volatile Environment"

by

Martin Indyk
Vice President and Director of the Foreign Policy Program
at The Brookings Institution

September 20, 2012

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on a subject of great importance to the United States.

For much of the last century, the Middle East was known for its volatility. Unfortunately, the first decade of the 21st Century is reinforcing this tradition. Protecting U.S. vital interests in Israel's security, the security of our Arab allies, and the free flow of energy resources from this region to the global economy remains a daunting challenge in the face of Arab revolutions, Jihadist terrorism, sectarian warfare, and Iran's bid for a nuclear weapons capability that threatens to trigger a nuclear arms race in the Middle East.

You have chosen to focus this hearing on how to safeguard Israel's security in the current environment. To answer that question we should start with a net assessment of Israel's security situation. While the very volatility of the situation necessarily makes judgements risky, it nevertheless seems to me to be very much a glass half empty/glass half full situation.

Undoubtedly, Israel's neighborhood has become far more uncertain as a consequence of the Arab revolutions sweeping the region:

- The rise of a democratically-elected Muslim Brotherhood president in Egypt has raised understandable concerns in Israel about the future of the Israel-Egypt peace treaty which is the cornerstone of Israel's strategic posture in the region.
- This uncertainty combines with a deteriorating security situation in the Sinai Peninsula on Israel's southern border, the result of a decade of neglect by the Mubarak regime.
- In Gaza, Israel has established an uneasy informal truce with Hamas but the continued smuggling of offensive weapons into Gaza, the rise there of Jihadist groups,

the influence of Iran through its proxy Palestine Islamic Jihad, and Hamas' own ideology that seeks the destruction of Israel, makes for a dangerous brew.

- The rise of Islamist political leaders and parties across the region compounds Israel's heightened concern given their historical hostility toward the Jewish state.
- On Israel's north-eastern border, the Assad regime's brutal effort to suppress the aspirations of the Syrian people is generating a descent into chaos and a sectarian war that threatens to spread to Lebanon and Iraq. Nobody can determine today what the future of Syria portends but the view from Jerusalem cannot be sanguine given the potential for another Islamist government rising on its borders, this time with a considerable arsenal of chemical weapons.
- On Israel's northern border with Lebanon, Hezbollah has been placed on the defensive because of the troubles of its Syrian sponsor but it continues to maintain an arsenal of some 50,000 rockets and missiles that are capable of blanket attacks on Israel's main centers of population.
- In the West Bank, the Palestinian Authority of Abu Mazen and Salam Fayyad have been doing a very credible job of maintaining order and preventing terrorist attacks against Israelis but as economic circumstances deteriorate there and progress toward a two-state solution remains a distant prospect, demonstrations have broken out.
- On Israel's long eastern border, the King of Jordan is struggling to maintain order and pursue promised political reforms in dire economic circumstances. The regional volatility threatens his throne even more than it threatens Israel's security but the net effect for Israel is to begin to place a question mark over the stability of the Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty.
- And then there is Iran, which reminds Israel on what has now become a weekly basis that it seeks to "wipe it off the map." Iran's steady advance toward the nuclear weapons threshold is reaching a point where Israel's leaders fear that they will no longer be able to eliminate its capabilities and will therefore have to rely on the commitment of the United States to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Given the troubled history of the Jewish people over many centuries, placing the fate of the Jewish state in the hands of foreign leaders -- no matter how reliable -- necessarily heightens their sense of insecurity.

Just to list these developments is to make one want to exclaim: Oy Vey! But it's important to put them into a broader perspective:

- Israel today has the strongest, most technologically advanced armed forces in the Middle East. The Congress has good reason to be proud of this reality because it has done so much -- on a bipartisan basis -- to make this possible. Together with Congress, and following in the footsteps of previous Democratic and Republican administrations, the Obama Administration has done much to reinforce this development with its support for the deployment of the Iron Dome anti-rocket defense system, enhancement of Israel's Qualitative Military Edge, and strengthening of intelligence cooperation.
- Israel has a close and strong alliance with the most powerful country in the world -- a strategic relationship that began during Republican administrations but has been reinforced by Democratic administrations, none more so than the Obama

Administration which has taken the strategic relationship to new levels. As Israel's Defense Minister declared last year: "I can hardly remember a better period of American support and backing...than what we have right now."

- Egyptian President Morsi has pledged to uphold the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty and is beginning to devote attention and resources to the security situation in Sinai, in close coordination with Israel. Indeed, according to Israeli defense officials, military-to-military relations with Egypt have actually grown stronger since the revolution last year. Morsi has also signaled Hamas that it should keep things quiet in Gaza since he has no interest in developments there sparking a crisis with Israel that could severely complicate his efforts to secure American support for Egypt's economic recovery.
- Hamas' calculations are also affected by the fact that it has lost its external headquarters in Damascus because of the sectarian strife there, forcing it to move out of the Iranian/Syrian-led "rejectionist" camp, into the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood camp that has pledged to uphold the peace treaty with Israel.
- Hezbollah's strategic circumstances have also taken a dramatic turn for the worse because the likely demise of its Syrian sponsor threatens to cut its supply lines from Iran and strengthen its Sunni rivals in Lebanon.
- The Syrian army is consumed with a debilitating civil war that is destroying its conventional capabilities and steadily eliminating its ability to make war on Israel.
- And again, thanks to the Congress and the Obama Administration, Iran is facing what its leaders admit are "crippling" sanctions, including oil sanctions that have cut its exports by 40 percent, and financial sanctions that are severely complicating its ability to conduct international commerce. Iran today faces international isolation, UN Security Council sanctions, and a bipartisan U.S. commitment to prevent it from acquiring nuclear weapons.

Of course, Israel has very good reasons to be concerned about the volatility of its strategic environment and the threats of destruction emanating from Tehran. And even though the Arab world today is preoccupied with its own troubles and challenges, the failure to put the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on a positive path toward achieving a two-state solution leaves Israel vulnerable to a sudden, unpredictable development that could bring the Palestinian issue back to the top of the Arab agenda and dramatically worsen Israel's strategic circumstances.

Nevertheless, today Israel is no longer a weak and isolated state incapable of defending itself. And with wise leadership and the steadfast support of the United States, it has every reason to be confident that it will be able to effectively navigate the treacherous waters in which it now finds itself.

Mr. CHABOT. The gentleman's time has expired. Thank you very much.

The panel now will have time to ask questions. I will begin with myself. I will recognize myself for 5 minutes.

I would like to ask our witnesses about their views on the campaign that we often refer to as the delegitimization of Israel, particularly at the United Nations. Year after year, more than 25 percent of the resolutions adopted by rollcall vote in the General Assembly are aimed at delegitimizing Israel. Many are the usual anti-Israel declaratory resolutions, but a few, in particular, bear special attention. Those are the mandates and funding authorizations that use the U.N. umbrella to conduct a worldwide propaganda campaign against Israel. I will give just a couple of examples: The Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; another, the Division for Palestinian Rights; and, finally, the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Human Rights Practices Affecting the Palestinian People.

My question is, what can we do better at the U.N. to steer the U.N. away from its all Israel bashing all the time policies or agenda? And what can we do to convince member states, who should be voting with us against these resolutions, that, for one reason or not, do not? Mr. Abrams, if you would like to take that one?

Mr. ABRAMS. This has been a long-running battle, Mr. Chairman. The problem, in part, is we need to make this a piece of our bilateral relationship with those countries, and we most often don't do it. We view it as "Oh, yeah. It is just a U.N. vote. It is not a very big deal," instead of saying, "This will affect whether your prime minister or foreign minister is invited to Washington and whom he or she sees there. This will affect your level of foreign aid. This matters to us." I think they see it as a kind of free vote. And we need to make sure that there is a price for those votes.

Mr. CHABOT. Okay. Thank you.

Let me go to my next question. It is perceived that our political relationship with Israel is currently in the worst shape in two decades, in the words of Mr. Abrams. In your opinion, what is the implied message that Israel received when President Obama apparently refused a meeting request for Prime Minister Netanyahu? And how do Israel's neighbors in Iran view the current state of relations between Israel and the U.S.? And how does this impact Israel's security? And I will go to you on that, Mr. Phillips.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Well, I think unfortunately, the way Iran would perceive that is drifting away or splitting between U.S. and Israel. And that would feed on a sense of weakness. And I think that too often, U.S. restraint, either in defending vocally its own interests or those of its allies, are perceived as weakness in the Middle East and especially by Iran. And I think that is one reason I called for the President to reconsider his scheduling and meet with the Prime Minister.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you.

Mr. Indyk, let me ask you this question. There has been a lot of confusion recently about the administration's position on Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. There was even a flap about this, the convention, and a vote, which many people thought the results were not what was reflected on the floor. But that happens on the floor

here occasionally as well. But, nonetheless, it was pretty embarrassing, I thought.

Is Jerusalem the capital of Israel? And would you like to comment on the administration's position on this?

Ambassador INDYK. As a twice Ambassador to Israel, Mr. Chairman, I have learned the hard way that nothing good comes of raising this issue. I actually think that people in the pro-Israel community in this country are completely skeptical of this being raised by our Presidential candidates as a way to somehow curry favor because they have seen it so many times before.

Every Presidential candidate, Republican or Democrat, says that "Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. And I will move the Embassy to Israel if I become President." And, lo and behold, they could become President. And they find very good reasons, the reason to state, not to do anything to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital. And so, regardless of party, nothing has changed on this issue. Regardless of platform, regardless of commitments made, nothing has changed on this platform, on this policy——

Mr. CHABOT. Okay. My time has actually——

Ambassador INDYK [continuing]. Since the time that the Congress passed legislation——

Mr. CHABOT. Yes. My time has expired.

Ambassador INDYK [continuing]. To exclude——

Mr. CHABOT. So I want to get the other members. Just let me, in conclusion—and I normally ask this in a second panel, but we are not going to have time for that—the recent instability. I was in Libya about a month ago and had meetings in which Chris Stevens was an important part. And I stayed at the residence there in Tripoli. And we were at Cairo later on in the trip as well. But this was truly a fine individual who served our country very, very well. And it is just a terrible thing which happened to him and the other diplomats and security personnel as well.

My comment would be that I am very concerned that what we are seeing right now with this turmoil in the Middle East is the perception at least—whether it is a reality or not we can argue but the perception at least that the U.S. is retreating from that region, that we are not going to play as big a role. And there was this idea from the administration that we are going to shift from there to southeast Asia, which is important. China is a clear rival. I don't want to say enemy but rival for the next 100 years. But nature abhors a vacuum, and the vacuum is being filled by elements which are not friendly to the United States.

But I don't really have time to ask for your response. And so I will at this point turn to Mr. Ackerman and grant him 5 minutes.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I still find it intriguing that people who are such really brilliant thinkers will sometimes reach conclusions that one might legitimately disagree with, spend so much time and energy of late—and I underscore "of late"—trying to blame the problems of the world and the region on the current administration, rather than try to figure out how we go forward. Something bad happens somewhere else because someone did this to that. Therefore, how do we blame it on President Obama? This is very counterproductive and really not helpful to our American interests.

I mean, the riots in the streets and the discontent over whatever the reasons and it is a tinderbox there and it has been that way for a long time, to try to blame that on the administration is like me trying to blame President Bush for Pluto being thrown out of the list of planets or blame his father for losing America's Cup. I mean, it makes no sense. Things happen during your watch for which you have no responsibility.

And if, indeed, the military relationship between Israel and the United States—and if you ask the Israelis, they will tell you it is not just good; it has never been better. The intelligence-to-intelligence relationship has never been better. The cooperation has never been better. The money, materiel, and everything else has never been better.

So the problem is the personalities don't get along. Which is more important: The sizzle or the steak? You know, it is a public relations thing. You know, you draw the picture of the restaurant. You make the steak attractive. Whether it is a real steak or not, it doesn't matter. It is the image. And I think we are spending a lot of time on the notion, "Let's discredit the administration," instead of "Let's fix the Middle East."

Friends of Israel try to make Israel more secure, rather than try to make their own country more weak because they may not like the administration. The rush to judgment that the President isn't as engaged in things, I didn't see that happening when President Bush was President for 8 years. There was no engagement whatsoever as things slowly started to come to the boil that it is at now.

You know, the question isn't, are we better off now than we were—why 4 years ago? How about 5 years ago or 7 years ago? You know, it is a political reason to pick the number "four." Let's get serious.

Question. Mr. Phillips, you had said the administration has a reluctance to use the military option. Do you think we should use the military option? And what day should we use it? Would it be a day this month or next month or special day of the week? Should it be a Thursday? Should it be the third Wednesday after the first Monday in November? Should it be January 24th, after the President is sworn in? What day should we use the military action? And what day should we announce it?

Mr. PHILLIPS. Okay. I would not specify a certain day, but I would say it should be done before Iran attains enough highly enriched——

Mr. ACKERMAN. How much? Would you quantify the amount? Would you say, "If you have 27 pounds, 2 ounces"?

Mr. PHILLIPS. I wouldn't quantify it in such specifics. And I understand that the administration——

Mr. ACKERMAN. You would say that the military option is on the table?

Mr. PHILLIPS. And it would be used, not just that it is on the table but it will be used.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Well, if it is on the table, you know, you don't set the table unless you are going to eat the meal.

Mr. PHILLIPS. No. You don't always use every implement that is on the table, though, when the table is set.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Did President Bush say he was going to use the military option or did he just say there should be a two-state solution?

Mr. PHILLIPS. Well, I think he did support the two-state solution, but——

Mr. ACKERMAN. No. He created the two-state option. He is the one who first announced it. No President had uttered those words before,——

Mr. PHILLIPS. Yes.

Mr. ACKERMAN [continuing]. Democrat or Republican. I am not blaming President Bush. I am just pointing out that the pointing fingers is not really helpful.

Now, how do we fix this? How do we get Iran—I think—and maybe it is because I am prejudiced—but I really believe that we have to be constantly engaged in the region. I don't believe we could move forward using a military option without putting together a coalition of support, both for ourselves and Israel, for the region's sake and the world's sake, which would include some of our Islamic friends and some of our Arab friends. How do you do that unless you demonstrate that you are willing to talk for us, rather than just burst into somebody's country without giving peace a shot?

Mr. CHABOT. The gentleman's time has expired. Was that question directed at anyone in particular?

Mr. ACKERMAN. Only if somebody knows how to answer it?

Mr. CHABOT. Does anyone know how to answer it?

Mr. ABRAMS. Very briefly, I would say, Mr. Ackerman, it is not going to work unless the Iranians believe it. And today there is no evidence that they believe that there is a real risk of an American military attack. Until they believe that, I don't think the negotiations are going to go anywhere.

Mr. PHILLIPS. I would just say that it is not just Israel that is threatened by an Iranian nuclear weapon. There are many Arab allies, too, that are equally concerned and——

Mr. ACKERMAN. But they have asked us to try to use the negotiation process first to try to——

Mr. PHILLIPS. Yes. And behind the scenes, they say other things. I mean, this isn't——

Mr. ACKERMAN. Oh. Everybody would be happy if we—most people would be happy to do that. Most of them agree that they would be thrilled in the morning having the dream at night come true that Israel wiped out, but they can't really say it. But we have to line them up because they are responsible to their streets as well. And their street wants to see a little talk before we invade some country.

Mr. CHABOT. Ambassador Indyk, if you could comment very briefly?

Ambassador INDYK. I will be very quick, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the opportunity.

I think, first of all, that the military option is a real option. I think that the Iranians can see exactly what we have deployed around them in terms of the two carrier battle groups that are now off the shores of Iran, including the array of aircraft that we have

deployed in the region. It is a robust military option that the Israelis also recognize as a robust military option.

So I think that the deployments are far more important than the words, but I agree with Congressman Ackerman that if it is going to come to war with Iran—and I fear that it will, next year—then we have to be able to show, not just for the international community but for the people of this country who have been supporting wars in the greater Middle East for more than 10 years—that we have done everything possible to try to convince the Iranians to make a strategic decision to give up their nuclear weapons aspirations.

And if we fail at that, then we will be justified. And I believe we will have the American people behind us to use the military option that has already been developed.

Mr. CHABOT. The gentleman's time has expired. The chair would just note in a very quick response to the gentleman's point about being critical of this administration about things happening around the world, I would just note that when the Bush administration was in charge and the folks from the other side of the aisle were in charge of this committee and other committees, there was no restraint in criticizing Mr. Bush for everything that was happening around the world. So it is not unusual to do that.

Mr. Turner from New York is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TURNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Many of our diplomatic and economic options are pretty much exhausted. We have been doing this for quite a while. The question was raised, at what point should our conversations begin with the strategic and tactical?

The centrifuges produce so many grams of fissionable material, high-grade, per week. I think we know how many we have. Somebody can do the math.

Last year, late last year, at some of these committee hearings, we were told September is the critical month. They would have enough material there to produce two implosive type devices. I don't know what has changed, but it seems that the clock is running out. And when is a kitten a cat? More than 8 weeks but certainly not a year. This kitten is getting pretty fat.

What is the date? We do know. Somebody knows. I don't know if the CIA has been that forthcoming on what they know or even the Israelis on when this material is producible. And the production facilities are only in three sites. What are our plans? And what are the consequences? Who is doing this or who should be doing this?

Anybody like to comment, please? Mr. Ambassador?

Ambassador INDYK. Well, I think the first response would be that Iran does not today have a nuclear weapon. According to the IAEA, which has inspectors on the ground and is able to measure their stockpiles, those stockpiles are growing. And they have—I think it is roughly enough low-enriched uranium if it were enriched to high-enriched, weapons-grade uranium to build perhaps four or five bombs, but it has to be enriched from 3.5 percent to over 90 percent in order for them to be able to make a nuclear weapon. And that is the critical difference.

And I agree with you that they are advancing toward that threshold. And they are also enriching to 20 percent. And they have now in terms of enrichment of 20 percent. They are moving toward one bomb's worth. They are doing that in a deeply embedded facility in Fordow, which will be hard to destroy from the air but not impossible by the United States.

So all of these things are very disturbing, which is why I say I think we are entering the period in 2013 where if we fail to convince Iran that it will be far worse off if it continues down this track than if it decides to make a strategic decision to give up its nuclear weapons aspirations.

But if we fail at that—and I think it is more likely that we will fail—then we are going to be in a situation next year where we will have to make a very hard decision, whether it is to let Israel take care of its problem or whether we decide to take care of the problem ourselves. And I think we should. It is not just a threat to Israel, but that decision doesn't have to be made now. There is still time to test whether we can turn the Iranians around. There is not a lot of time.

Mr. TURNER. If I may? Mr. Abrams, do you concur that this should be given more time? Is there any softening? Is there any hope?

Mr. ABRAMS. There has been no softening in the Iranian position. I think it has been a great disappointment to the European negotiators, in particular, that when we have met over the past year, they have gotten nothing from Iran. The Iranians have not budged.

I think that one cannot pick a sort of magic date and say, "It is February 15th, no problem on the 15th, great danger on the 16th." You can't do that. But we are approaching first the point at which they will have everything they need to make a series of deliverable nuclear weapons.

And, second, of course, we are approaching the point at which Israel will no longer be able to act. And then Israel needs to make a decision before we do.

I would agree with Ambassador Indyk it is really very odd for us as a great superpower to say, "This is a global problem, with which we are deeply engaged. But we are not going to handle it. We are going to just turn it over to a nation of 7 million." Now, I would hope that if we reach that point, the United States makes the decision, rather than handing it to Israel.

Mr. CHABOT. The gentleman's time has expired. The gentleman from Florida, Mr. Deutch, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Abrams, I think your characterization of the administration's position is just wrong. I don't believe that the administration's position is that this is only a problem for Israel that should be handled by Israel. I think that the President's position, as he has outlined repeatedly, is that this is a global problem, that this is a problem that the United States is prepared to use military force to handle. And the difference between Mr. Phillips saying that every option is on the table and saying that that includes military options and saying, "I am willing to use it" I think gets at the bigger point I wanted to raise with you, Mr. Abrams, which is, you know, on this committee, we spend a lot of time working in a bipartisan way on

these issues, trying to pass, as we have done multiple times, tough sanctions after more tough sanctions, funding issues, working to ensure that Israel's security assistance remains in place. And that support that you see in this committee is consistent with the history of the support in this body for the security of the State of Israel.

Now, suggesting, as you do in your testimony, that while it is true that the military cooperation, intelligence cooperation is the best it has ever been, that, despite our deficit, we have managed to increase security assistance to Israel to unprecedented levels, hundreds of millions of dollars additional for Iron Dome and other missile defense systems, which I would point out are saving Israeli lives right now, conducting the largest showing military exercises, while all of that is true, as you acknowledge, you seem to dismiss it in your testimony as well, "Any administration would do that." And what we also need to look at, you tell us, is the politics of the relationship. And that is what I would just like to pursue a bit with the panel.

For those of us who work so hard and struggle so hard to make this a bipartisan issue, I wonder whether you would agree that in terms of ensuring that bipartisan support, that, despite everything we both agree that this administration has done for Israel, that for the Republican nominee for President to announce to the world, not just to his convention but to the world, that the United States, the United States, despite everything we agree has happened, has thrown Israel under the bus, injects into the relationship the type of politics heretofore unseen. We have never seen that type of politics in the middle of this relationship. That is number one.

I wonder if you would agree with me that since politics is a fundamental part, according to your testimony, of the relationship, that that type of politics raises issues around the rest of the world that calls into question that bipartisan support that has historically existed and that exists, even today; and that, number two,—and I would open this to anyone on the panel—I wonder if you also think that it is appropriate. I would just like an honest assessment of this. Along the same lines, given the importance of the politics and the bipartisan nature of the relationship, I wonder if it is appropriate for a political group to support a candidate in the Presidential election using footage of the Prime Minister of Israel. I just worry about what that does to infect the political process, how that seeps into even some of the discussion that takes place here.

Mr. ABRAMS. Well, I will take a first crack at it, Mr. Deutch. I would bet that if you go back to the Clinton campaign, you will find criticism of the way the George H. W. Bush administration dealt with Israel. If there wasn't, there should have been in my opinion. And I don't think that is off limits. We want bipartisanship, but we also have the right to say a policy is wrong. It is wrong for—let me just say the chairman of the Joint Chiefs——

Mr. DEUTCH. I am going to stop you for 1 second. I have got to stop you for a second because there is a fundamental difference. You have to agree there is a fundamental difference with questioning the policy. I don't have any objection to that. I have no objection with questioning a policy of this administration or any other on Israel or any other issue. There is a difference between ques-

tioning a policy and the approach that an administration takes and a blanket statement that this administration has, despite everything that you and I agree has happened has, nevertheless, thrown Israel under the bus.

Mr. ABRAMS. Well, I don't agree. And I think that we are in the middle of a political campaign. And what you are asking, in essence, is that there not be politics. There is going to be politics.

I worked for Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush. And I laugh when I hear people say, frankly, that politics stopped at the water's edge when they were running for President. That is not what I recall. I recall vicious attacks on their foreign policy.

And just one tiny comment on the Iran sanctions. What you have done on Iran sanctions is fabulous. And you know better than I do that in many cases, you were fighting the White House to get those Iran sanctions through, and they were trying to hold you back. So they don't get credit for that. You get credit for it.

Mr. CHABOT. The gentleman's time has expired, but the gentleman, I will give him an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. DEUTCH. I appreciate it, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Abrams, two things I would note. First of all, those tough sanctions that we passed don't become law because the House passes them and the Senate passes them. They become law because they are passed in the Congress and the President signs them. That is number one.

Number two, all of the tough sanctions that have been imposed are imposed again not because they are in a law but because the administration imposes them. I wish—and I will just finish with this, Mr. Chairman. I wish that sanctions had been imposed in a serious way under the last administration or the administration before that, frankly. Finally they are being imposed and we are seeing the results.

And I would love to continue this conversation when we have an opportunity.

Mr. CHABOT. The gentleman's time has expired. The gentleman from Pennsylvania is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MARINO. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. Indyk, I am going to play a little devil's advocate here with you. You stated, I think it was—I don't know who my colleague was that—I think it was Mr. Ackerman brought some issues up concerning time, but how much time do you think we have left with Iran? When will we know the time is right to react to the situation, whatever the moment calls for? Is it, again, a day? Is it next month? Is it 6 months from now? Put not necessarily a time limit, but give me some facts that will indicate the time to move was based on certain points.

Ambassador INDYK. Well, I think the clearest answer that I can give you, Congressman, is that the time to strike would be in my opinion when we saw Iran enriching uranium to 90 percent.

Mr. MARINO. Do you think we have our arms around that? Do you think we really know what is going on over there as far as what has been enriched and what will be enriched in the near future?

Ambassador INDYK. We do now because we have inspectors there who are able to measure.

Mr. MARINO. I am sorry. I can't help but chuckle a little bit. Do you think the Iranians are going to actually open up everything to the inspectors?

Ambassador INDYK. Well, it is always possible, of course——

Mr. MARINO. Yes, of course.

Ambassador INDYK. Excuse me, Mr.——

Mr. MARINO. Of course.

Ambassador INDYK. It is always possible that the Iranians have clandestine production. That is certainly possible. They certainly have tried to do things in a clandestine way. But we have been able to discover them. And the fact that there are inspectors on the ground and intensive efforts by the United States, by Israel, and by allied intelligence services to watch them like a hawk, I think there is a degree of confidence that we do know. But, of course, there could be places where it is being done.

But let me say that a military——

Mr. MARINO. I only have 1 more minute.

Ambassador INDYK [continuing]. A military strike is not going to find those. By definition, we are not going to be able to solve that problem with a military strike.

Mr. MARINO. So your position is that we wait until some way it is proven that they have enough of the uranium that they need to produce a bomb?

Ambassador INDYK. Yes. I think that the difference between what I understand to be your position and my position could be all of 6 months. I said very clearly that I think next year is the time when we will come to a conclusion as to whether the Iranians are willing to make a strategic decision to give up their nuclear weapons, believe it or not.

Mr. MARINO. If I were a betting man, I would not bet on the Iranians.

Ambassador INDYK. I am not betting. I am not a betting man.

Mr. MARINO. Mr. Obama, President Obama, suggested that the borders in Israel move back to the pre-1967 lines, leaving Israel less than 9 miles wide. Ambassador Abrams, could you give me some insight on that, please?

Mr. ABRAMS. Well, I think the Israeli objection, Congressman, is that that kind of gives away a negotiating position for them. They will want to negotiate to some extent from where they are, not from borders that the United States, among others, have said are impossible to defend. And their objection to what the President said was that it suggested that you start not today but in '67. And that puts them at a disadvantage.

Mr. MARINO. Mr. Phillips, why should the United States not respect Israel's sovereign decision concerning Jerusalem as its capital?

Mr. PHILLIPS. I think it should respect. I think every country should be able to determine where its capital is, although, you know, I understand that Jerusalem does have aspects in east Jerusalem. But to me, you know, I think we should recognize west Jerusalem as Israel's capital, but I don't think there is a reason not to aside from the peace process, which I don't see going anywhere too fast anyway, that there is a reason not to respect that.

Mr. MARINO. And——

Mr. CHABOT. The gentleman's time has expired. I will give him an additional 30 seconds if he wanted to make a final point.

Mr. MARINO. Just one final point. In the Oval Office in March 2001, 6 months before 9/11, President Bush told Sharon that he, Bush, will use force to protect Israel.

I yield my time back.

Mr. CHABOT. Okay. The gentleman yields back. And the gentleman from the Commonwealth of Virginia, Mr. Connolly, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And welcome to the panel.

Just an observation, maybe particularly for you, Mr. Abrams. You and I go back a long time. There are a lot of us on both sides of the aisle with staunch 100 percent voting records in support of Israel. I think my colleague Mr. Deutch was making a broader point then—because your point is well-taken, shock, shock, politics in an election year, but there ought to be limits, self-imposed limits. Questioning the motivation of the President of the United States with respect to Israel and actually saying he is compromising the security of another sovereign state is a very serious charge. And once the dust settles from an election, the consequences of that—if we want to make this a partisan issue, the only loser in that is Israel.

And so I would just suggest, respectfully, that both sides need to show some restraint, even in the political arena, when it comes to this delicate subject matter, for the sake of the security we seek to protect, just an observation.

Mr. Ambassador, you were starting to say in response to one of my colleagues' queries we have time, not a lot of time but some time. And I think you were referring to the red line. I want to give you an opportunity maybe to expand on that. It would appear, you know, that there is a difference between Israel and the United States on where that red line ought to be, not on the ultimate goal. And, to my way of thinking, not unsympathetically, Israel has more reason to be concerned immediately than we do. And, therefore, some deference might be shown to their anxiety about where the red line is. And we have got to be ever vigilant and ever sensitive about that. On the other hand, we have to protect U.S. interests and not run pell-mell into yet another war in the Middle East.

Your views on that difference between the red line? And I welcome the other panelists as well, but I thought I would start with the Ambassador since I think you were starting to talk about that.

Ambassador INDYK. Thank you, Mr. Connolly.

I think that what I was trying to say was that there is a structural difference between a small power living in Iran's neighborhood and a superpower that doesn't live in that neighborhood. And it is all the difference in the world when it comes to crossing red lines.

We naturally can survive with a greater degree of ambiguity and a greater assurance that we can take care of the problem if Iran tries to break out. Israel has greater difficulty doing that. And given its more limited military capabilities, by definition, because it is a small power, regional power, it has naturally to want to go earlier in terms of using force.

If you look at what Israel did in the case of the Iraqi nuclear reactor and the Syrian nuclear reactor, they attacked at points where their nuclear programs were far, far less advanced than the Iranian nuclear program. So they have actually been exercising a good deal of restraint, partly because we are telling them to do so, partly because they recognize that in the case of Iran, it is not a clear shot. And there are a lot of other interests and other powers that have interest at stake and that it is not just about Israel and that it is from their point of view important that this be an international responsibility, not just an Israeli's responsibility. And, frankly, they have succeeded in making that case and getting the international community, led by the United States, to take on this responsibility in a much more serious way than would have been the case if the Israelis hadn't been saying, "We are going to do something about this if you don't."

But now we are reaching a kind of crunch point. And essentially what the Prime Minister of Israel is saying is, "I am going to lose my chance to act independently, to defend my country by myself. And I am then going to have to put the fate of my country in the hands of another leader. And that is a very difficult proposition for an Israeli prime minister to handle." And I think that is why we have seen the Prime Minister say some things which I think were impolitic because of the nervousness that he feels about this.

Mr. CONNOLLY. And I respect very much what you said. I would note, however, that his is not the only voice in Israel. There are many other Israeli leaders, very high-level leaders, who would take issue, respectfully, with the Prime Minister on this issue. So it is not that there is only one point of view.

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

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I am sorry the other panelists didn't get a chance to maybe comment on that.

Mr. CHABOT. I can give you 30 seconds if you would like to extend that.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I would so much appreciate that.

Mr. CHABOT. Okay. Either 30 seconds, Mr. Abrams or Mr. Phillips?

Mr. ABRAMS. Sure. I find myself in a very good bipartisan agreement with Martin Indyk on this. I think you used the word "structural" before. There is a mismatch here between the moment that the Israelis have to act and the pledge they want. If they want a pledge from any President of the United States that by a date certain, we will attack another country, they are not going to get it. No President would give it to them. I understand why they are asking.

I would just say on the question of Israeli agreement and disagreement, there is some disagreement on timing. I think many of the people who were saying, "This is not the moment to act against Iran" believe that next year is the moment to attack. When I talk to many of the retired military people, I find unanimity that unless the United States can solve this problem, they will have to address it themselves next year.

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

In wrapping up, the chair would just note for the records that there are four chairs there at the table. Only three of them are oc-

cupied. The subcommittee extended an invitation—no, we are not having a mystery actor coming in, but the administration was extended an invitation to testify here this afternoon, and they declined to testify this afternoon.

And, then finally, members will have 5 days——

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Chairman?

Mr. CHABOT [continuing]. To amend their remarks or to submit materials for the record.

Yes?

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Chairman, I just want to say to you this is the second subcommittee hearing I have been to in the last week in which the administration has declined to participate on this committee. And, you know, I was a staffer in the Senate. I just don't think that is acceptable. You know, when a committee is trying to pursue in this case a profound policy issue, I think they need to be at the table.

Mr. CHABOT. Yes.

Mr. CONNOLLY. And I am distressed. There may be circumstances. I don't know. But I am distressed that the administration is not sending witnesses at the request of the subcommittee. And I would certainly join the chairman in renewing such request.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you. And once again I find myself in complete agreement with the gentleman from Virginia. So it is bipartisan. And is the spirit moving the gentleman from New York here his last meeting?

Mr. ACKERMAN. It sounds like you guys have got the same complaint as the Prime Minister.

Mr. CHABOT. I guess we do. All right.

Well, if there is no further business to come before the committee—and once again we extend the best wishes to Mr. Ackerman in the future—we are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:16 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Material Submitted for the Hearing Record

SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia
Steve Chabot (R-OH), Chairman

September 18, 2012

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

DATE: Thursday, September 20, 2012

TIME: 1:30 p.m.

SUBJECT: Safeguarding Israel's Security in a Volatile Region

WITNESSES: The Honorable Elliott Abrams
Senior Fellow
Council on Foreign Relations

Mr. James Phillips
Senior Research Fellow for Middle Eastern Affairs
The Heritage Foundation

The Honorable Martin S. Indyk
Director
Saban Center for Middle East Policy
The Brookings Institution

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 SUBCOMMITTEE ON *MESA* HEARING

Day *Thursday* **Date** *September 20th* **Room** *2172*

Starting Time *1:31* **Ending Time** *3:15*

Recesses [*1*] (*1:54* to *2:18*) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

Steve Chabot

Check all of the following that apply:

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

TITLE OF HEARING:

Safeguarding Israel's Security in a Volatile Region

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chabot, Ackerman, Rohrabacher, Turner, Fortenberry, Marino, Deutch, Bilirakis, Keating, Connolly

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: *(Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)*

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.)*

Connolly Statement
Bilirakis Questions

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED *3:15*

Subcommittee Staff Director