

made as part of the 1993 Oslo peace accords, and for which Arafat was ironically given the Nobel Peace Prize, to renounce violence and crack down on terrorism.

Let me be perfectly clear: there is no moral equivalence between those who send teenagers to blow themselves up in crowded Israeli cafes and a government that must utilize its armed forces in order to defend its citizens.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has no choice but to fight a war against the terrorist infrastructure in the Palestinian territories so long as Arafat's police forces are doing nothing to stop terrorism, and worse, aiding it.

President Bush was exactly right when in his June 24 Rose Garden speech he called on the Palestinian people to elect new leaders untainted by terror, to build a democracy, and to end the scourge of terror, if they truly wanted the United States to recognize a Palestinian state. And it is vital that any "roadmap" toward the establishment of a Palestinian state be based on Palestinian performance, not timetables. Further, this performance should be judged by the party most trusted by Israelis—the United States—and not the United Nations, France, Russia or others.

On September 11, 2001, Israelis spontaneously gathered on the streets to mourn for the victims of that day's brutal attacks. Israel immediately offered the United States whatever assistance it might need. Israelis know terrorism, but they will never become inured to it.

At a time when Israel is treated as a pariah by the U.N. and much of Europe, when American academics seek to have universities divest from Israel, when anti-Semitic language reminiscent of the worst days of Nazism are considered fair game, it is imperative that the United States stand in solidarity with its true friend and ally, the State of Israel.

U.S. RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, as U.S.-led coalition forces act to remove Saddam Hussein from power, I would like to speak about another conflict in the Middle East that is, unfortunately, all too often in the news for the wrong reasons.

During the opening days of Operation Iraqi Freedom, U.S. forces seized two key airfields, known as H2 and H3, in Western Iraq. It was from these airfields that 39 Scud missiles were launched against Israel during the first Gulf War in 1991, prompting chaos and panic. While Israel was fortunate that the Scud strikes were ineffective, many more people died from heart failure blamed on war-related stress—68—than from the missile strikes themselves—2.

It was the intent of Saddam Hussein to prompt backlash by Arab nations against the U.S.-led coalition should Israel respond with military force to

the Scud attacks. That concern remains valid today.

Much of the current opposition in the Muslim community to military action against Saddam Hussein stems from their desire to see an end to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The United States policy toward Israel has been roundly criticized by some as lopsided in its support. There is no question that the United States provides Israel with more foreign assistance than any other nation—and deservedly so.

The United States played a critical role in the establishment of Israel in 1948. Our two nations are bound closely by historic and cultural ties as well as by mutual interests. As a key ally, and the only democracy in the Middle East, she deserves our support.

This does not mean, however, that the United States and Palestinians cannot build a similarly positive relationship.

On March 14, President Bush reiterated his support for the creation of a peaceful Palestinian State. I agree, and share the President's vision of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

I welcome the appointment of Mahmoud Abbas as Prime Minister and applaud the Palestinian Authority's decision to rebuff Yasir Arafat's attempts to retain power over the Cabinet.

I am not convinced, however, that these actions alone are enough to warrant the United States' full endorsement. The Palestinian Authority must crack down on those terrorist organizations that seek to derail any prospects for peace in the Middle East. Groups like Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade.

I pose this simple test. If the Israeli military were to withdraw its forces to pre-1967 boundaries, what is the likelihood that Palestinian terrorist organizations would end their suicide attacks against innocent Israelis?

Likewise, if attacks by Palestinian terrorists were to end, what is the likelihood that Israeli troops would end their excursions into Palestinian held land?

At present, I would suggest the latter is a much more likely scenario.

Israel has every right to defend herself against these terrorist attacks—and the United States should not endorse efforts that would undermine Israel's national security.

There are those who suggest that U.N. peacekeepers should be sent in, or that the Middle East "quartet"—the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations—should present a roadmap for peace.

The United States should not—must not—be drawn into endorsing any "roadmap" that does not require the dismantling of the operational capabilities and financial support of terrorist groups within a Palestinian state. When Palestinian leaders refuse to crack down on terrorist organiza-

tions, Israel has every right to take the necessary measures to protect its national security.

Certainly, there is a role for the international community to play in the process. To provide assurances to both sides that their interests will not be steamrolled.

But, for true peace to be achieved, it is inherent that Israel and the Palestinian people reach a peace accord between themselves, without outside influence. An agreement dictated and enforced by a third party will not result in long lasting peace.

History has shown that peace cannot be achieved with Yasir Arafat in charge of the Palestinian Authority. At the Camp David summit in July 2000, then-Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered Chairman Arafat a remarkable array of concessions. Unfortunately, Arafat was unable to muster the political courage to accept these concessions—because to accept would mean the end of his reign; the end of his power over the Palestinian people. Yasir Arafat was not willing to make that sacrifice for peace in the Middle East.

We have seen this type of behavior from Arafat in the past. There is no indication that it will change in the future.

But now, the Palestinian Authority has moved past Yasir Arafat. The position of Prime Minister has been created. A Prime Minister has been appointed. The power to appoint a cabinet is his alone. The potential is there for truly significant reform.

This is encouraging. But it is only a beginning. Now, they must recognize that terror and violence do not work. That arrested extremists must remain in jail. That denouncing suicide attacks entails more than just words.

Certainly, Israel must do its part. The establishment of settlements in the territories seized in the 1967 war must be stopped. Retaliatory violence against innocent Palestinians must be curtailed. I was pleased to read that on March 24, Israeli troops dismantled an illegal Jewish settlement near Hebron. This crackdown on settlements must continue.

There is a dual responsibility here. Israeli and Palestinian authorities must prevent extremists on both sides from setting and driving the agenda. The continued acts of violence and aggression only demonstrate that some groups in the region will always oppose a peace agreement. These groups must be placed on the sidelines. They must be delegitimized.

Peace is possible. But it takes real effort by both sides to make it happen. We have seen significant concessions from Israel in the past. Yasir Arafat was unwilling to reciprocate. I am hopeful that Prime Minister Abbas proves more amenable.