

**Remarks by Secretary of State John Kerry at the Saban Forum  
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<http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2013/12/218506.htm>

**SECRETARY KERRY:** (Applause.) Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Tamara [Wittes], for a very, very generous introduction, and thank you for the great work that you are now doing at the Saban Center at Brookings. And good afternoon to everybody. Welcome to a rather remarkable – I’ve been noticing the numbers of people. I don’t know if you can get the President of the United States as an opening act, but I’ll take it. (Laughter.)

It’s really a pleasure for me and a great honor for me to be here with all of you. And as I’m looking at the faces, particularly in the front row here, and General Allen and others, it’s as if a bunch of us just sort of time warped ourselves from meetings in Jerusalem yesterday, and here we are. (Laughter.) So from yesterday morning in Jerusalem to this afternoon in Washington, it’s a pleasure to be here. Welcome to all of you who have traveled from Israel and from the territories.

It is a very special pleasure to be here with Haim and Cheryl Saban. I am so personally graced by their friendship, and got to know them well during the course of my elected political life. But it’s really nice to be able to come here today and congratulate both of them in person for the incredible work that they have done to further a strong relationship between the United States and Israel.



Haim Saban, Egyptian Born American Israeli Businessman, Interviewing US President Obama at the Saban Forum, December 7, 2013.  
Photo Credit – White House

And this forum, as all of you have seen in the last 24 hours, has become an invaluable expression not just of their personal commitment, but of our ability to be able to come together to talk about complicated issues.

It is already the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and during that short span of time it is safe to say that this has become really the premier venue for U.S.-Israel public dialogue. And I guess it’s no surprise because there is a lot to talk about.

I’m also – I’ll just share with you quickly. Haim and I are about the same age, and when we were each in high school – Haim in Tel Aviv, and me in New England – we both picked up the bass guitar and we dreamed of making it big as rock stars. (Laughter.) If you ever heard the music that my band mates and I made – and you can go on YouTube and actually hear it – you’d know that my first true act of public service was when I stopped playing public gigs. (Laughter.) And maybe that’s why I wound up as – wound up as Secretary of State and Haim became a Hollywood mogul. But from garage band to the present is quite a journey.

I'm looking at this front row here. Mr. Foreign Minister, it's a pleasure to see you here. You and I will have the privilege of having breakfast tomorrow morning, and I congratulate you again on coming back to these duties, and I look forward to working with you. It's going to be very, very important. I'm also privileged to see Minister of Justice Tzipi Livni. We've become great friends and worked very closely together over time. She took me to Sderot, where I saw those rockets that come out of the Gaza Strip, and we've spent many hours together sharing thoughts about the possibilities.

And Mr. Prime Minister, wonderful to see you again, Ehud. Thank you for continuing to be a voice in this process. And Boozhi – I just had a chance to spend some time with Boozhi and the leader of the opposition, as you all know, and having been in the opposition and been in the majority, I know the important role that he plays and will play in the future. And I congratulate him on his victory.

I think I want to also recognize our President of the Brookings – where is Strobe? Somewhere here. Strobe, thank you. Great service, not just here but obviously as former Deputy Secretary of State and many other ways. And I value his counsel. He has come over to help me think about Nagorno-Karabakh and other frozen conflicts. And I'm privileged – we all are privileged to have his continued public input. And Ted Piccone, congratulate you on taking over from Martin while he is now with us working the cause, as you have said. And I am grateful for Martin's dedication and willingness to do some very, very difficult, time-consuming and patience-requiring work, and I thank him for doing that.

I will share some thoughts with all of you on a number of things here today, and I wish I could stay. There's nothing I love more than the give and take. I love to take the questions. I know you have plenty of them. And it would serve well probably to be just answering questions. But unfortunately I have to go from here to the Kennedy Center honors, which I preside over this evening. So my time is a little bit limited, and I apologize for that.

As was mentioned by Tamara in her introduction, late last night I got back from my eighth visit to Israel – Mr. Justice Breyer, it is wonderful to see you here. Thank you. A good New Englander, folks – a Red Sox Nation fan and all of that – (laughter) – my eighth visit as Secretary of State. Now, I am not a masochist. (Laughter.) I am undertaking this because I believe in the possibilities. And as many of you know, I have spent almost 30 years in the United States Senate, and I'm proud of my 100 percent voting record for Israel, but I'm proud also that I built up relationships in the Mideast with leaders in Arab countries and elsewhere who learned that they could come to trust me. And I believe that I approach this great challenge with a huge sense of responsibility about building trust and ultimately building a process that will test and provide guarantees to people about this concept called peace.

On this visit, I spent most of the time focused on Israel's security concerns because for years and years and years, it has been clear to me from every prime minister that unless a prime minister can look the people of Israel in the eye and make it clear to them that he has spoken for Israel's

security to a certainty, you cannot make peace. It is a prerequisite. And for anyone who feels somehow there might be an unfairness in that, all you have to do is look at the history and understand why that's a fundamental reality. And I mean all of the history.

Every time I visit, I can feel in my gut, and I see it as well as hear it firsthand, just how vulnerable Israel can be and just how important it is for the United States' commitment to Israel's security to remain ironclad.

Ours is a commitment that spans decades. In 1973, it was the driving force behind the 32-day airlift that the United States conducted to deliver vital military assistance to Israel, to the forces, in order to help turn the tide of the Yom Kippur War. About a decade later, our commitment to Israel's security spurred the U.S.-Israeli development of ballistic missile defense technologies to keep Israelis safe from rockets and missiles. Those systems – and newer technologies – continue to protect Israelis from the range of threats that they still face today.

President Obama and I – and I think you heard this from the President in his Q&A earlier today – remain deeply committed – indeed, determined – to ensuring Israel has the ability to defend itself, by itself. That's why in fact, by any measurement, President Obama's administration has done more than any before to make Israel more secure, including: funding Iron Dome, which has saved untold lives by intercepting hundreds of rockets that might otherwise have struck schools, hospitals, or homes; deepening our day-to-day security, our partnership at the military level, at the intel level, on an ongoing basis; negotiating a new, long-term memorandum of understanding to lock in U.S. military assistance for the future; providing access to the most sophisticated U.S. military technology, such as precision munitions, the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, the V-22 Osprey – which Israel is the only country in the world to receive from the United States; and engaging in extensive training and joint exercises in areas of special operations, missile defense, and search-and-rescue. Unprecedented levels.

These examples and a lot more, should make crystal clear our commitment to preserve Israel's qualitative military edge, so that Israel can defend itself, by itself, against any threat. And when Israel or if Israel were to come under attack, whether by terrorists on its borders or by an international organization, we will always stand up for Israel's right to defend itself. And the United States is always particularly prepared to be the first and fastest to Israel's side in any time of crisis.

Now we approach this challenge believing that Israel has to be strong to make peace – but that peace will also make Israel stronger. And we are convinced that the greatest security will actually come from a two-state solution that brings Israel lasting peace. Shared prosperity throughout the region, good relations among neighbors, peace of mind for the people of Israel and for Palestinians alike – none of this is possible without addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns, and ensuring that, as a result of peace, Israelis not only feel more secure, but are more secure, not less.

Now that is why security led our agendas in Jerusalem and Ramallah this week. Now, I want to make it clear, we've been at this I guess since April, when we announced the resumption of talks, and the months preceding were obviously dedicated to trying to get there. By necessity, we have had to do some groundwork, some due diligence in order to be able to address these legitimate concerns and questions in a way that they have never been addressed before. In Ramallah this week, we engaged in that discussion as well as in Jerusalem. General John Allen – who is sitting right here in the second row – has done extraordinary work. He commanded our coalition forces in Afghanistan; trained up 350,000 troops there, not to mention the tens of thousands in Iraq. This is a man who knows how to build capacity. He recently retired as a four-star Marine Corps General, and he is one of the best military minds in America. And he has been asked by the President and me and the Secretary of Defense to lead this effort of a security dialogue with the IDF. He is helping us make sure that the border on the Jordan River will be as strong as any in the world, so that there will be no question about the security of the citizens, Israelis and Palestinians, living to the west.

I will tell you point blank, and I've read all of the history of these negotiations and I've lived part of the history of these negotiations. I was on the lawn when the famous handshake took place. And I've had many, many a meeting over the course of time as Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and as a Senator. Never before – ever – has the United States conducted such an in-depth analysis of Israel's security requirements that arise from the potential of a two-state solution. Never.

Understanding the importance of this analysis, we are examining every potential security scenario – something on the border; something in the future; terrorism in the future; a weakness of the Hashemite Kingdom. Whatever it might be. We are coordinating with Jordanians and the Palestinians to create a layered approach that both guarantees Israel's security and fully respects Palestinian sovereignty. That's a threading of a needle, but it is a critical threading of a needle that has to happen in order to achieve an agreement.

General Allen is joined by dozens – literally, I think there are about 160 people: military experts, intel experts and others working to analyze this so what we put on the table is deadly serious, real, because these stakes are real. And we have highly qualified defense officials working with dozens of organizations in the United States, including the Office of the Secretary of Defense; the Defense Security and Cooperation Agency; the Defense Threat Reduction Agency; DARPA, which is the Pentagon's research arm that created the Internet; not to mention the Joint Staff and the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. They're all hard at work, analyzing what began, frankly, back in 2011 as a preliminary analysis was made, and now is becoming state of the art as we ramp it up for this possibility of peace. They're all hard at work in close consultation with their IDF counterparts. And we will engage in further close evaluation with Shin Bet, with Mossad, with every aspect, and with the Palestinians – and with the Palestinians, which is critical.

We have a separate team assessing Palestinian security needs in the context of statehood. We anticipate that the United States will continue to play a leading role in building – helping to build Palestinian capacity, helping to build their capabilities to maintain law and order; to cooperate in an effective judicial system; to counter terrorism and smuggling; and manage border security, customs, immigration. Needless to say, for a period of time this will obviously involve Israeli participation. It has to. But there also have to be objective standards by which we measure the performance.

The former police commissioner in my hometown of Boston, Ed Davis, who is widely respected in the law enforcement community, was in the West Bank in August offering his strategic counsel. And we will work at this as professionally as anybody has ever done. We will not leave things to chance. There are serious responsibilities that come with statehood, and I have shared that notion with my friends in the West Bank. And they take it seriously. They do. It will take time to train, build, equip, and test Palestinian institutions to ensure that they're capable of protecting Palestinian citizens – their primary responsibility is that – and also of preventing their territory from being used for attacks on Israel.

Now, I've heard all the arguments. We pulled out of Lebanon. Look what we got – we got rockets. We pulled out of Gaza. Look what we got – we got rockets. Well, yeah, we did. But we also didn't settle any of the issues. Unilateral is not an answer. You've got to resolve the fundamentals of this conflict. And if all of you take the time to examine the history of Wye plantation, in Madrid, and Oslo, and all of the efforts before, what happened is they always left the final-status agreement to the future. And that leaves it to mischief, and it leaves it to all the worst forces that can fill a vacuum. It is essential, in my judgment, to reach for a full agreement and to have a framework within which we can try to work for that. After waiting so long for statehood, the Palestinian people deserve effective state institutions. And Israel and Jordan must know that they will have a reliable and responsible neighbor – not a failed state – living between them.

Now, I believe and President Obama believes that strong diplomacy is essential. Make no mistake: security is only one essential part of this equation. Backed by the unquestioned potential of our powerful armed forces and alliances, we have to also engage in strong, smart diplomacy. And that is diplomacy, backed by force, which can achieve outcomes that force alone often cannot actually produce.

Diplomacy, for example, is today succeeding in removing the threat of Syria's chemical weapons. As the civil war was raging just north of major population centers in Israel, Prime Minister Netanyahu raised with me his concerns about those weapons potentially falling into the hands of Al-Nusrah, al-Qaida, Ahrar al-Sham, or the Iraqi State of the Levant. I mean, this is a real threat – falling into the hands of Hezbollah or any other al-Qaida-affiliated terrorist. And we were growing in our concern of that, and so, incidentally, were the Russians.

We consulted closely with Israel about those contingencies, but, frankly, neither of us had a perfect solution. As much as some yearned for a military strike on Syria – and I’ve heard it all – bombing Syria’s chemical weapons stores would not have effectively removed the threat and it would have entailed enormous risks to innocent civilians. Now at one point that was our option; it was our only option. At best, we believed that we could deter and degrade Syria’s chemical weapons capability through targeted military strikes. And don’t forget, President Obama made his decision and announced publicly that he was ready to take action.

But in the end, it was diplomacy that resulted in a peaceful process of accounting not for some, but of giving us the ability to account for all of these weapons and eliminate these weapons that pose such a threat to Israeli citizens and others in the region. The process to remove and destroy those weapons, I can report to you today, is on track to be completed by the middle of next year. And we, the United States, will provide the capacity to destroy those weapons, and we are working with the Russians to contain them and move them and ship them to take them out of Syria itself, proving that diplomacy can be so powerful, it can defuse the world’s worst weapons.

So that brings us obviously to Iran. We are using diplomacy to fully and verifiably address the threat that is posed by Iran’s nuclear program. It is a real threat. We have always taken it as such. We have no illusions – none whatsoever. Let me restate something that President Obama has made clear since day one, and reiterated again this afternoon: We will not allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon. Period. Not now, not ever.

Now, believe me, the United States fully understands that Israel perceives a nuclear Iran as an existential threat. Why? Because it is. And we understand that. And while we may sometimes favor a different tactical choice – tactical – the United States and Israel have always shared the same fundamental strategic goal. As we move forward in this negotiation, we will continue to consult very closely with Israel, as with our other friends and allies in the region and around the world whose input is critical to us in this process.

This week, Prime Minister Netanyahu’s National Security Advisor Yossi Cohen will travel to the United States for direct conversations with our Iran experts, and that will help us to coordinate and shape our positions with respect to a comprehensive agreement going forward. As we enter negotiations for a final, comprehensive agreement, we absolutely do so with our eyes wide open, and, as yet, I have to say, unconvinced that Iran will absolutely make all the decisions, the hard decisions necessary to reach such an agreement. But these negotiations will not be open-ended. And given what we all know of its history – the history of Iran with respect to its nuclear program: a hidden mountainside site; unbelievable numbers of centrifuges; new, faster, speedier, more effective centrifuges, all the things that we know – we have a right to be skeptical, and that’s why this is not about trust, not about words; it’s about actions. It’s about testing the process, testing their commitment. This is about living up to verifiable, transparent, internationally accepted standards, and only diplomacy can get you to the place where you establish what that is.

Now let me make something else clear. I am convinced beyond any doubt that Israel becomes safer the moment this first-step agreement is implemented. Let me repeat that. Israel will be safer the day this begins to be implemented than it was the day before. And I say that because with implementation, we will then sit down with our P5+1 united colleagues and partners, and sit down with Iran, for the comprehensive discussion that Prime Minister Netanyahu has always said he favors. And we will do so, with all due respect, with one important advantage: we will have ensured that Iran's program will not advance while we negotiate.

As we negotiate, Iran will forfeit its entire stock of 20 percent enriched uranium, which Prime Minister Netanyahu highlighted in his 2012 speech at the United Nations, and which is relatively a short step away from weapons grade.

As we negotiate, Iran will be unable to grow its stock of 3.5 percent enriched uranium, or unable to stockpile or increase the number of centrifuges that are operating at Fordow and Natanz. We will for the first time be able to inspect and go into the workshops and the storage facilities for these items. As we negotiate, international inspectors will have unprecedented access to Iran's key facilities, which we don't have today. We will have daily access to Fordow, daily access to Natanz, and regular access to the Arak heavy-water reactor site. And they are required to give us the plans for that site.

As we negotiate, the Arak facility, which is still under construction and which could have provided an alternative path to a bomb, will be prohibited from installing any new components whatsoever, or testing additional fuel. As we negotiate, our Treasury Department will remain absolutely determined to enforce our core sanctions architecture, which has deprived Iran of more than \$80 billion in oil revenue since 2012. So in a year and half, we've deprived them of \$80 billion, and in this deal we're going to let \$4 billion be released? You think that makes a difference, while 25 billion – 15 to 25 billion will be put away, still escrowed, still deprived over the course of these six months? And by the way, none of it happens all in one day; it happens seriatim, sequentially, as the process is implemented. We also have prevented, as you know, access to the international banking system. We will work with our international partners to ensure that that commitment does not waver.

As we negotiated, I've personally instructed every bureau at the State Department and each of our missions around the world to remain vigilant for any sign that any sanction is being skirted. And as we negotiate, we will continue to be perfectly clear that, for Iran, the price of noncompliance, of failing to satisfy international concerns about the nuclear program, will be that we immediately ratchet up new sanctions, along with whatever further steps are needed to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, including – as President Obama just made clear – a military option, if that were necessary.

So there shouldn't be an ounce of doubt. This is a debate we shouldn't be having. The real question is what's going to happen with the final agreement. The United States stands squarely behind our Israeli friends and allies in the region and in the world. And the result of all of these

steps that we are taking is that Iran's breakout time, the period required to produce enough weapons-grade material intended for nuclear weapons, will have been increased because of our diplomacy.

Now, we are obviously well aware that even a comprehensive agreement wouldn't solve all our problems with Iran, and we don't pretend that they do. It wouldn't address their support for Hezbollah. It won't deal with Syria – although it would have some impact, ultimately. It doesn't deal with other terrorist organizations, or their attempt to destabilize our partners throughout the region. Whatever the outcome of the upcoming negotiations, Iran will still have much work to do. But I am convinced that we have taken a strong first step that has made the world, and Israel, safer, even as we work to solve this problem once and for all.

So once again, I want to emphasize: A careful balance of strength and diplomacy gives us the best chance to reach our common goal, and to do so without having to resort to force.

Now, I want to come back to the peace process for a moment, because there is another existential threat to Israel that diplomacy can far better address than the use of force. And I am referring to the demographic dynamic that makes it impossible for Israel to preserve its future as a democratic, Jewish state without resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a two-state solution.

Force cannot defeat or defuse the demographic time bomb. Israel's current state of relative security and prosperity does not change the fact that today's status quo will not be tomorrow's or the future's. The only way to secure Israel's long-term future and security will be achieved through direct negotiations that separate Palestinians and Israelis, resolve the refugee situation, end all claims, and establish an independent, viable Palestinian state, and achieve recognition of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people.

Now, President Obama and I are absolutely committed to reaching a final-status agreement that recognizes two states for two peoples, living side-by-side in peace and security. There's no mystery about what a two-state solution looks like. For many years the broad contours of an eventual solution have been absolutely clear, and they were crystallized for the world in December of 2000 when President Clinton laid down the parameters for a final-status agreement. They were reaffirmed through the Annapolis process during the Bush Administration. A basic framework will have to address all the core issues – borders, security, refugees, Jerusalem, mutual recognition, and an end of claims. And it will have to establish agreed guidelines for subsequent negotiations that will fill out the details in a full-on peace treaty.

This is the stuff of our strong diplomacy when it comes to peacemaking. Now, we, the United States, obviously, cannot nor should we make all the hard decisions – only the leaders themselves, the governments themselves, can do that – but we can serve as the facilitator, the honest broker, and the full partner in an effort to reach agreement. And for all the talk about our disengagement or declining influence in the Middle East – just ask yourself about my eight trips.

In the Middle East, the fact is that both parties still look to us to play this role. We are doing so, we are deeply engaged, and we will remain so through thick and thin.

Now, I understand that there are many who are skeptical of whether American diplomacy can achieve this breakthrough to peace. Steps that destroy trust, by the way, like continued settlement activity and incitement, only feed that skepticism on both sides.

But I believe that if you indeed care about Israel, and everybody here does, if you care about its security, if you care about its future, if you care about Palestinians achieving their legitimate aspirations for self-determination, which we do also, we need to believe that peace is possible. And we all need to act on that belief.

Now, after so many decades of disappointments, I'm not a starry-eyed Pollyanna-ish idealist who comes at this and thinks you can just wipe it away and make it happen overnight. I understand it's difficult. If it were easy, it would have been done. It's no surprise that skepticism – even cynicism – is widespread. Doubts that peace is possible, regrettably, often blind people to even having a good discussion about all the benefits that peace can bring. I ask you to imagine what a two-state solution will mean for Israel, Palestine, Jordan, and the region. Imagine what it would mean for trade and for tourism – what it would mean for developing technology and talent, and for future generations of Israeli and Palestinian children. Imagine Israel and its neighbors as an economic powerhouse in the region.

It is long past time that the people of this great and ancient part of the world became known for what they can create, and not for the conflicts that they perpetuate. It is long past time that Jerusalem – the crucible of the world's three great monotheistic religions – becomes known, not as the subject of constant struggle, but as the golden city of peace and unity, embodying the aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Peace is possible today because we have courageous leaders who have already taken significant political risks for peace – and the time is approaching when they will have to take even more. They have shown real courage – both President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu. President Abbas has made tough choices and he has stayed the course, despite people in his team saying you ought to get out of here, look at those settlements. They're making a fool of you. Believe me, that battle's been going on, because I deal with it every week. And at the same time there's been Israeli soldiers shot and killed in the West Bank and other acts of incitement.

Prime Minister Netanyahu has made tough choices and just this week he reaffirmed his commitment to a Palestinian state. And he said: "Israel is ready for an historic peace."

Peace is possible today because the Arab League has also made tough choices, for the first time they came to Washington, they met with me, and they came out and announced for the first time that the new map will look different than the 1967 borders. It will accommodate realities on the ground. The Arab Peace Initiative holds out the possibility of normalizing relations with Israel,

and strengthening security in the region. Just think of how much more secure Israel would be if it were integrated into a regional security architecture and surrounded by newfound partners. Think of an end to the unjust but also inexorable campaign to delegitimize Israel in the international community.

The United States has fought these efforts, often alone, at every opportunity, most recently in our successful effort to secure Israel's entry this week into the Western European and Others Group at the UN in Geneva. And we fought hard for that. But think of the new markets that would open up and the bridges between people that peace would build. Think of the flood of foreign investment and business opportunities that would come to Israel, and how that will change the lives of everyday people throughout the region.

As Stanley Fischer, the former governor of the Bank of Israel, has said: A peace agreement with the Palestinians could boost Israel's GDP in a short period of time by as much as 6 percent. Israel would also enjoy a normal, peaceful relationship the minute this agreement is signed with 22 Arab nations and 35 Muslim nations – 57 countries in all.

It is not beyond our imagination to envision that a new order could be established in the Middle East, in which countries like Jordan, Morocco, Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the GCC states, a newly independent Palestine, and an internationally recognized Jewish State of Israel join together to promote stability and peace.

Ben Gurion knew from the start that if his young state were to do more than just survive, if Israel were to succeed, it would need more than just strong defenses. He said Israel would need strong ties throughout the Middle East. He wrote as much into Israel's Declaration of Independence, promoting, quote, "bonds of cooperation" with Israel's neighbors. That didn't happen right away, of course. But Israel has always known it's strongest when it extends its hand in peace, when it is in the high moral ground. That's why the Declaration of Independence of Israel went on to state from day one that Israel would, quote, "do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East" – the entire Middle East. That was the vision of the founding fathers.

Now, I understand that some think the current upheaval in the region makes this an inopportune time to try for peace. But I happen to agree with what Prime Minister Netanyahu wrote in a rather remarkable open letter to the citizens of Israel, that he wrote at the beginning of these negotiations. He wrote that the dawn of a new era in the region is exactly the right time to recast Israel's relationships and to change the narrative with a new generation that is starting to make its voice – its voices heard. Recent events have in fact created both the incentives and the opportunities to pursue peace urgently.

So we meet today on the anniversary of Pearl Harbor, a day that reminds us and it reminds the world of the horrible costs that war entails. Like so many Israeli citizens – including many of you here in this room – I wore the uniform of my country, and I've seen war. That is part of what makes me such a passionate advocate for peace.

As someone who has been committed to Israel's struggle for peace and security for 30 years, I also know that diplomacy doesn't happen without strength. I am proud to see how Israel has used both sides of this coin in order to become a powerful, beautiful country, an amazing country blooming out of the desert, technologies that could be used throughout the region, and how Israel is fighting to keep alive a flame that makes it a light unto nations, to build its first-class defenses and alliances that allow it to negotiate from a position of strength.

We know that diplomacy without strength is blind to the world's perils. But we also believe that strength without diplomacy is blind to the world's promise. If diplomacy, backed by the credible threat of military force, can erase the menace of chemical weapons in Syria, if it can prevent the menace of nuclear weapons in Iran, if diplomacy can solve the existential, demographic threat to Israel's future as both a Jewish and a democratic state – if we can fully address these threats near and far without going to war, Israel, the region and the world will be more secure. And so will the United States.

My friends, as everyone here knows, the world is mourning the loss of a great leader right now, Nelson Mandela. Mandela was a stranger to hate. He rejected recrimination in favor of reconciliation, and he knew the future demands that we move beyond the past. Just think of the lessons that he taught the world, which have special significance at this moment in history: He said, "It always seems impossible until it is done."

Now all of us who seek peace, and the skeptics who think it can't be achieved, should bear in mind those words. And as the sun sets on this Sabbath, let me leave you with a favorite line from the Psalms that I understand is recited in the evening prayer service. It is a prayer for overcoming danger, a prayer that we might know, all of us, true security:

"Shelter us in the shadow of Your wings," the Psalmist wrote, "for You are a protector. ... Spread over us the shelter of Your peace."

Through the grace of God, and hard work here on earth, may all us come to know the shelter of peace. Thank you very much. (Applause.)