

**US Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro's Address to Security Conference in Tel Aviv
(18 January 2016)**

<http://israel.usembassy.gov/amb01182016.html>

Claiming that Israel employs a double legal standard in the West Bank, US Ambassador Dan Shapiro received a harsh rebuke from Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu calling the remarks made at Tel Aviv security conference, "unacceptable and incorrect." In the midst of four months of episodic Arab attacks on Israeli civilians, Shapiro nonetheless lashed out at Israeli policies in the West Bank. Shapiro did praise Israel for prosecuting earlier Israeli settler attacks on Palestinians; and State Department officials condemned Palestinian attacks on Israelis. Still, Shapiro's remarks stung many Israelis including those on Israel's political left. Shapiro noted that "too many attacks on Palestinians lack a vigorous investigation or response by Israeli authorities; too much vigilantism goes unchecked; and at times there seem to be two standards of adherence to the rule of law: one for Israelis and another for Palestinians." As the Obama administration has in the past, Shapiro criticized Israel's settlement policy in the West Bank where an estimated 400,000 Israelis live among 2.6 million Palestinians.

Ken Stein, January 2016

Thank you very much Marcia for that kind introduction. It's always a pleasure and an honor to join INSS for all its sessions.

Let me begin by also thanking General Amos Yadlin, General Udi Dekel, Chairman Frank Lowy, Orly Ha'yardeny and the entire INSS staff for putting together a terrific conference as always. And I will tell you what you already know: the wisdom and insights generated by INSS make an enormous contribution to Israel's national security and foreign policy community, to the diplomatic community, and to Israel's friends around the world.

The U.S. Embassy maintains a strong connection with INSS, and I am honored we are again supporting this year's conference.

As many of you know, and as I told Amos a few weeks ago, we were looking forward to a keynote address from our outstanding Ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power. Unfortunately, pressing business in New York forced her to postpone her trip, so we look forward to a future opportunity for her to visit Israel.

Let me also acknowledge the many distinguished American guests who are here, including those who have made great contributions to our national security: General David Petraeus; Ambassador

Wendy Sherman; the Honorable Jane Harman; General John Allen; the Honorable Michele Flournoy; Tamara Wittes; Matthew Spence; and many others. I think it is a testament to the strength of the most extraordinary of bilateral relationships that so many outstanding former public servants are with us this year and keep coming back to engage Israel.

At the outset, let me voice a very personal note in light of the vicious terror attacks of the last few days. Since October, like so many Israelis, I have had to attend funerals, make shiva calls, and paid visits to hospitals.

Like all Israelis, I have worried about friends and neighbors, colleagues and family members, against the backdrop of this latest wave of terrorism. Among the victims have been American citizens, like Eitam Henkin, Richard Lakin and Ezra Schwartz, *zichronam l'vracha*.

Yesterday, a young mother of six, Dafna Meir, *zichrona l'vracha*, was brutally murdered in her home as she fought to protect her children from a Palestinian terrorist armed with a knife. And today, even as Dafna's family buried her, a young pregnant woman was viciously stabbed and badly wounded by another terrorist.

In the face of such outrages, the United States condemns unequivocally these barbaric acts of terrorism, as we believe all others should do; we offer support and sympathy to the bereaved families and the wounded, and assistance to families of American citizen victims of terror; and, we are committed to do everything we can, and call on all others to do everything they can, to bring an end to the violence and help restore security and stability.

This conference seeks to explore whether the rules of the international game are changing, or indeed, whether there is a new game altogether. Whichever it is, it is apparent that terrorism, in old and new forms, is likely to remain a feature of the international game for the foreseeable future. Our task, of course, is to develop tools and strategies to confront these threats, and others, while protecting our interests and security, and those of our allies.

In light of the events of this past weekend – and I must say that the timing of this conference reflects the precision instincts and targeting of fighter pilot Amos Yadlin – I would like to start by reviewing what they tell us about the United States' strategy and commitments, and what we are able to achieve through American diplomatic leadership. Later, I will also look ahead to what 2016 holds for the opportunities and challenges in the U.S.-Israel relationship and in America's global leadership.

The IAEA's determination on Saturday that Iran has completed the nuclear-related steps to which it committed in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the JCPOA – the international agreement to

stop Iran's nuclear weapons program – was the key determinant for reaching “Implementation Day.” The P5+1 and the EU have acknowledged and concurred with the IAEA's determination.

Saturday's announcement, President Obama said, “marked a milestone in preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.” And while the U.S. and Israeli governments differed on the approach in this agreement, our objectives were – and remain – the same: to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. To us, that is part and parcel of our commitment to Israel's security.

Let me describe just a few examples of actions taken by Iran since the JCPOA was concluded.

Two-thirds of Iran's 19,000 centrifuges, including the disconnection of every single nuclear enrichment centrifuge at the Fordow facility, have been removed. Iran reduced its vast stockpile of up to five percent enriched uranium from over 12,000 kilograms, enough for numerous nuclear bombs, down to under 300 kilograms, far less than the amount needed for even one nuclear bomb – a reduction of 98 percent. Iran also removed the core of the Arak reactor and filled it with cement. Iran has been forced to redesign that facility to ensure it cannot be used to produce weapons-grade plutonium.

All told, Iran's “breakout” time has now been extended significantly, from 2-3 months, to well over a year. Today, we can say with utmost confidence, as Secretary Kerry said yesterday: “each of the pathways that Iran had toward enough fissile material for a nuclear weapon, has been verifiably closed down.” That makes all of us more secure.

Per the JCPOA, nuclear-related sanctions on Iran have been lifted by the United States and the EU, including a number of America's primary and secondary trade sanctions and measures aimed at undermining Iran's financial sector. Yes, as we have acknowledged, this was a negotiation, and each side had something they wanted.

But it is vital to recall that that United States still maintains a broad array of American sanctions tied to Iran's on-going support for terrorism, its destabilizing activities in the region, its abysmal human rights record and its on-going ballistic missile program. In fact, just yesterday the U.S. Treasury Department announced new sanctions in response to Iran's violations for ballistic missile activity.

At the U.N. Security Council, measures targeting Iran's missile program and its arms transfers remain in effect. Security Council Resolution 2231, which enshrines the JCPOA, also contains extraordinary “snap-back” provision that cannot be held hostage to any member's veto. And the United States will have the unilateral ability to approve or reject any attempt to transfer sensitive nuclear technologies to Iran.

President Obama understands and shares the concerns many Israelis feel about Iran. We understand that Israel is closer, more vulnerable and more sensitive to Iranian threats. We understand the Jewish people's bitter experience with those who call for their annihilation – and mean it – and Israelis' experience as targets of international terrorism, including murderous attacks linked to Iran.

The fact that we have reached the milestone of Implementation Day by no means suggests that we dismiss or minimize the anxieties about Iran's intentions going forward.

That is precisely why we insisted on an agreement that contains some of the most intrusive monitoring and verification provisions ever enacted, including measures that specifically target the prospect of Iran breaking the agreement by pursuing a covert path to the bomb.

In addition to the IAEA's continuous monitoring of Iran's declared nuclear sites, which will ensure we have real-time knowledge of any violations there – the international community now “has visibility and accountability over the entire supply chain that supports Iran's nuclear program, from uranium mines and mills to centrifuge manufacturing and operation,” as Secretary Kerry said Saturday. On top of that, we have our own national intelligence assets, and that is why President Obama said with confidence that “if Iran tries to cheat, we will catch them.” Not only will we catch them, we will have enough time to respond accordingly, with whatever option is required.

Verification, as Secretary Kerry said in Vienna, “is the backbone of this agreement.” We see Israel, with its own formidable intelligence assets and technical analysis, as a partner in this endeavor and look forward to continuing our near constant and close dialogue on monitoring and verifying the agreement – just as Israel was a key partner in devising and enforcing the effective international sanctions regime that brought Iran to the table.

The JCPOA is a significant achievement and it reminds us once again, as Secretary Kerry said, “of diplomacy's power to tackle significant challenges. Diplomacy has to always be our first choice, and war our last resort.”

Over the weekend, we also welcomed Iran's release of several U.S. citizens who were unjustly detained in Iran. Although the two tracks—nuclear and humanitarian—were pursued separately, “there is no question that the pace and progress of the humanitarian talks,” as Secretary Kerry said Saturday, “accelerated in light of the relationships forged and the diplomatic channels unlocked over the course of the nuclear talks.”

To Israelis, who are understandably suspicious of Iran and anxious about Iran's nefarious activities in other realms, we say the following: this new nuclear framework leaves the international

community united and better equipped to respond to other regional challenges—and to respond “without the looming threat of a nuclear-armed Iran,” as Secretary Kerry said.

In terms of those other threats, from Iran’s dangerous and illegal support for Hizbullah and Hamas, to its ballistic missile program, to its ghastly intervention in the Syrian civil war, we are continuing to rely on all the tools in our arsenal, including interdiction, sanctions and designations and further intelligence sharing. Make no mistake: the JCPOA deals solely with Iran’s nuclear program and involves no trade-offs – Iran is not going to get a pass on its other destabilizing actions.

In truth, whatever our prior disagreements, both our governments are looking ahead, ready to confront common threats and advance our common security as partners and allies. And that was the spirit of the meeting between Prime Minister and President Obama at the White House in Washington in November.

Indeed, out of the tensions of 2015 there is a unique possibility: 2016 can be a year of deepening and expanding our cooperation – in holding Iran’s feet to the fire to ensure full compliance with the JCPOA, in blunting Iran’s dangerous non-nuclear activities, and in concluding a long-term bilateral agreement extending our unprecedented security partnership well into the next decade and beyond.

As our two leaders discussed at their last meeting, we have a golden opportunity this year to conclude a new multi-year Memorandum of Understanding on American defense assistance. The three billion dollar plus annual defense package is an extraordinary expression of support by the American people, enabling Israel to acquire advanced systems like the F-35, which will arrive later this year. Last month, we began detailed discussions on how to extend that assistance out into the future in a way that ensures Israel’s qualitative military edge as Israeli military and political leaders plan and prepare for Israel’s long-term defense in the dynamic and changing Middle East.

This effort underscores the Obama Administration’s deep commitment to supporting measures to enhance Israeli security. As we together develop answers to these questions together, we have the opportunity to put the U.S.-Israeli security relationship on an even firmer and deeper footing. It is an opportunity I am hopeful we will be able to seize in the near term.

Even in this challenging period, our security and intelligence ties grew deeper. The life-saving Iron Dome system may be the most visible area of our cooperation, along with the David’s Sling and Arrow 3 ballistic missile defense programs, many other arenas continue to bear fruit.

Ask any Israeli national security planner or defense official or top commander—or ask the Prime Minister—and you will hear that our security ties have never been stronger.

We are together responding to shared threats and working to perfect the next generation of technologies. In addition to missile defense, some of our most cutting edge collaboration involves cyber-security, tunnel detection and unmanned vehicles, and our intelligence partnership has reached new heights.

The end of 2015 left us deeply concerned about another issue – the latest increase in tensions and violence between Israelis and Palestinians, together with a diplomatic stalemate. If, as it appears, we are in an extended period when there cannot be direct negotiations, we must find ways of preserving the viability of a two-state solution for the future – Israel’s only path to avoid becoming a bi-national state; arrest negative trends that pull us away from the goal; and prevent the terrible violence we have recently seen. Critical questions stand before Israelis and Palestinians. As one of Israel’s closest friends, and as the longtime sponsor of peace efforts, we feel a unique responsibility to draw attention to these issues.

Secretary Kerry began to lay out some of these questions last month in a public address at the Saban Forum, and also in his visit here in November.

First, for Israel, we are concerned and perplexed by Israel’s strategy on settlements. This government and previous Israeli governments have repeatedly expressed their support for a negotiated two-state solution—a solution that would involve both mutual recognition and separation. Yet separation will become more and more difficult if Israel plans to continue to expand the footprint of settlements.

Settler outposts are being legalized—despite earlier pledges to the United States not to do so—while routine, administrative demolition of Palestinian structures continues. Again, the question we ask is a simple one: what is Israel’s strategy?

Settlements can never be an excuse for violence – never, as Secretary Kerry says repeatedly. But continued settlement growth raises honest questions about Israel’s long-term intentions. Another subject our leaders have discussed in recent weeks is land use. Nearly all of Area C, which comprises 60 percent of the West Bank, is effectively restricted for any Palestinian development. Huge tracts of land are claimed by Israel as “state” lands, or have been transferred into the projected boundaries of settlement councils.

There is also much in this arena where we work in partnership, like continued joint projects that have opened up access to the West Bank, like the Jalame/Gilboa crossing, or support for Palestinian Authority security forces, or on-going efforts to strengthen Palestinian public institutions. But

Israel's overall approach to land use raises important questions that must be confronted.

As Israel's devoted friend and its most stalwart partner, we also believe Israel must develop stronger, more credible responses to questions about the rule of law in the West Bank. The indictments in the Duma murders are an important demonstration of Israel's commitment to prosecute acts of terror, regardless of their source. But still, too many attacks on Palestinians lack a vigorous investigation or response by Israeli authorities; too much vigilantism goes unchecked; and at times there seem to be two standards of adherence to the rule of law: one for Israelis and another for Palestinians.

Hovering over all of these questions is the larger one about Israel's political strategy vis-à-vis its conflict with the Palestinians. What is Israel's plan for resolving the conflict? For remaining a Jewish and democratic state? And if it judges a political solution to be out of reach for the time being, then what is its plan for managing and stabilizing the conflict in the short and medium term? What tools can Israel provide to assist us in our global diplomatic defense of Israel, to which we will always be committed?

Americans understand there are no easy answers, and we also understand the enormous political challenges involved in grappling with these questions during a time of increased security threats and social anxiety. But the passage of time will not make any of these hard questions easier to answer.

We are also asking tough questions of the Palestinians and of Israel's Arab neighbors: questions about murderous incitement, about withholding recognition, questions about threats to end security cooperation, about support for terror groups, and about misuse of the UN system. How do these tendencies serve their own people, or build confidence among Israelis that there is a partner, or help achieve their aspirations for independence in a two-state solution? I will not detail these questions here as Secretary Kerry did at the Saban Forum, but I raise them to rebut any claim that we are one-sided in putting tough questions only before Israel.

For our part, we have been relentless and crystal clear in condemning terrorism and incitement; and we have been equally relentless in exercising our role in international fora—including the Security Council—to ensure that Israel's legitimacy and its right to defend its citizens are not impinged.

We have also been clear in laying out to Israeli, Palestinian and Arab leaders the kinds of positive gestures and steps on the ground we believe could help pull the parties back from today's precipice of despair and redefine the current atmosphere in ways that allow for the resumption of a

meaningful political process that can avoid a bi-national outcome. We will continue to do so.

I would like to briefly touch on questions of American global leadership, which I know are of great concern to Israelis given the Jewish state's out-sized stake in American power and influence. A century before Facebook "status updates," the United States' position has been a subject that has absorbed and transfixed Israeli leaders. David Ben Gurion wrote in describing his long voyage to New York during the first World War, "I always dreamed of America, its vigorous ultramodern life, its capitalism in the most developed and most democratic country." "We must see how exiles, constructed a state so rich, with unequaled power."

Israel's stake in American power and influence is unlikely to ease in the period ahead. For this reason, we understand why Israelis so frequently—and so unreservedly, with "doogri" speech as they say—opine on the state of American global leadership.

Our national security strategy continues to be guided by four enduring national interests: security, prosperity, values, and a rules-based international order. Let me reassure you: the state of American global leadership remains strong and robust.

As the President said Tuesday in his State of the Union address, the United States is committed to invest in its capabilities to maintain America's military primacy, and he noted that "no nation dares to attack us or our allies, because they know that's the path to ruin."

Our National Military Strategy stresses agility, innovation and integration, and we prepare and train and apply our power against state, non-state and hybrid threats.

Our forces are globally deployed. Our Special Operations units are in dozens of countries. In this region, our longtime presence in Turkey, our enduring naval presence in the Mediterranean, and our large footprint in the Gulf are unmistakable signs of American prowess and commitment. We come here to Israel to train, more than ever before. The sense of mutual respect and admiration between our militaries has never been greater.

Along with military primacy comes great responsibility, and President Obama has renewed America's commitment to the judicious use of power and our emphasis on collective action. President Obama has reshaped the model of American leadership and we believe it is a model that is more effective, more sustainable, and far less likely to lead to interventions gone awry. In Syria, we led the international effort to remove that country's enormous stock of chemical weapons, one of the two strategic threats to Israel that Chief of Staff Gadi Eizenkot mentioned,

along with Iran. In both Syria and Iraq, America continues to lead a coalition of 60+ nations to confront, contain and ultimately defeat ISIL. In addition to our own and our allies' use of force, we are training, arming, and supporting forces that are steadily reclaiming territory in Iraq and Syria. We are targeting ISIL's resources and blunting the flow of foreign fighters. We are also demonstrating our commitment to protecting Syria's neighbors and minimizing the destabilizing external impacts of the on-going civil war, including those that effect Israel.

On other issues of global concern, the U.S. continues to mobilize the world so that strong and sustainable multilateral responses define the global order and so that unilateral and destabilizing responses—like Russia's intervention in Ukraine—are isolated, contained and not emulated. In response to Putin's aggression; we have bolstered Ukraine's independent, freely elected government; we have deterred a broader conflict and we have imposed stiff costs on Russia. Looking further east, we continue to lead in the vast Asia-Pacific region, where American resolve has been on display for 70 years and where our leadership continues to attract partners and deter adversaries.

Our vision of American leadership is also that we must lead by example, another reason we are increasing the number of asylum seekers we will admit from conflict zones like Syria, why America remains a lead humanitarian donor and first responder, and why the Administration remains committed to closing the Guantanamo Bay detention facility.

We have used our leadership to address new and complex threats to global public health. "We stopped the spread of Ebola in West Africa," as the President said Tuesday, and did so with the help of Israeli and other international first responders and donors.

In terms of the instruments of American leadership, the President's framework also includes a renewed commitment to engage at the United Nations. We believe deepening our engagement at the United Nations has been a smart investment, not just for our security, but for the safety and security of our allies and partners.

On this point, Israelis are understandably skeptical, because we all know that Israel does not get a fair shake at the UN. Yet even on issues of concern to Israel, we believe our recent investment at the UN is helping counter the forces of delegitimization, generating new opportunities for inclusion, and chipping away at old impediments.

For example, we worked with Israel and other partners to ensure that last year, for the first time, the

UN General Assembly would debate the issue of global anti-Semitism.

Our soft power is also formidable and is a critical element of this framework. Promoting democracy, championing human rights, supporting free markets, defending religious freedom, safeguarding the rights of women and girls, responding to global health emergencies, combating anti-Semitism or standing up for the rule of law, American leadership is just as central to promoting norms and improving human security as it is to responding to traditional security threats.

We could easily hide behind two great oceans, and that's a suggestion that still rears its head back home from time to time. But we have instead chosen to act and lead. President Obama has a full foreign policy agenda heading into his eighth and final year, and we will pursue our priorities as vigorously as we did seven years ago.

I have tried to provide today an outlook for our bilateral relationship in the coming year, and also offer a reassuring picture of American global leadership. I know the issues I have put on the table are not easy ones, and they will likely continue to be debated at this forum. At a minimum, I have tried to do so in ways that reinforce the constancy and depth of our extraordinary alliance. It's an alliance that cannot be claimed by a single leader or political party, but one that has grown and deepened through both calm and rough seas.

We are indebted to those who built its earlier foundations, just as we are to those who steward the alliance today.

Thank you very much.