

Statement of Thomas R. Nides
Nominee to be Ambassador to the State of Israel
Submitted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
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Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and members of the Committee, it is a privilege to appear before you today.

It is an honor to be asked to serve as Ambassador to the State of Israel. I want to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me. I am grateful to share this day with my family.

I would like to thank Senator Klobuchar for her kind words of introduction. As the Senator mentioned, she and I have been friends for over 40 years, having served as interns together for Vice President Walter Mondale. I am grateful for her friendship.

As Senator Klobuchar mentioned, I grew up in Duluth, Minnesota the youngest of seven children. My parents were leaders in a vibrant but small Jewish community. We grew up believing being Jewish was more than a religion, but a way of life. Most importantly, my parents impressed upon my siblings and me the importance of giving back to our community and caring about others.

There is no greater honor than to be asked to strengthen the ties between the United States and the State of Israel. My many trips to Israel, both in government and the private sector, have strengthened my commitment to sustain Israel as a democratic and Jewish state at peace with its neighbors. The U.S.-Israeli relationship has long been based on both common values and strategic interests. We remain united in our shared commitment to democracy, economic prosperity, and regional security. Should I have the honor of being confirmed, some of the priorities that will guide my efforts include:

First, the United States remains unwavering in its commitment to Israel's security, supported by our 10-year, \$38 billion Memorandum of Understanding. Israel is one of our closest security partners in countering a broad spectrum of threats ranging from climate change to cyber-attacks to nuclear proliferation. Chief among these is the critical threat that Iran poses.

President Biden has made clear his commitment to ensure that Iran never develops a nuclear weapon. Upholding Israel's security serves America's national security interests and ensures that we will always have a strong, reliable, and secure partner.

Second, the United States remains committed to advancing the depth and breadth of the bonds between our people, including our ever-expanding economic relationship. Israel's start-up economy is safe and welcoming for U.S. businesses, with U.S. companies establishing two-thirds of the more than 300 foreign-invested research and development centers in Israel and President Biden announced we will work with Israel in hopes of them joining the Visa Waiver Program. Strategic competition with the People's Republic of China is a defining feature of the 21st century, and the United States views close cooperation with Israel on foreign investment risk management as a down payment on our security and intelligence partnership.

Third, the United States values working with a fellow democracy to oppose international institutional bias and promote human rights at home and abroad. I look forward to working with Israel to protect the freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, creating an atmosphere where all voices can be heard and highlighting efforts to advance the rights of members of vulnerable communities. Equally, we must continue to oppose all efforts to isolate and delegitimize Israel internationally. If confirmed, while respecting the rights of all Americans to free speech, I will continue the tireless work of this Administration to firmly reject the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement and boycott laws which unfairly single out Israel.

Fourth, the Abraham Accords are critical to regional stability and prosperity. I will personally support every effort to expand cooperation among Israel and countries in the Arab and Muslim world, and I hope to strengthen the Abraham Accords and identify opportunities to expand Israel's relations with additional countries in the Arab and Muslim world.

While we work to support normalization between Israel and other countries, it is not a substitute for Israeli-Palestinian peace, and we seek to harness existing and future agreements to make tangible improvements for the Palestinian people with a view to preserving the vision of a negotiated two-state solution. I am committed to doing my part to rebuild the partnership between the American and Palestinian peoples.

The priorities listed above are only some of the key issues that face any diplomat serving in Israel. Frank and fruitful dialogues only strengthen our partnership and deepen the bonds between Americans and Israelis.

Before closing, I would like to thank the very talented, dedicated cadre of public servants who represent the United States faithfully both here in Washington and abroad. It goes without saying that, if I am confirmed, the safety and security of all Americans, and not just those in the Embassy, but all those in Israel and the West Bank and Gaza, is my top priority.

I am humbled and grateful to serve this country and to work to strengthen all aspects of the U.S.-Israeli partnership. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I look forward to your questions.