

Testimony of Daniel B. Shapiro
On His Nomination to be Ambassador to Israel
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
May 4, 2011

Mr. Chairman, Senator Lugar, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. I am humbled and honored by the trust President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton have placed in me with the nomination to serve as United States Ambassador to Israel. If confirmed, I will do my utmost to meet that trust and responsibility and to promote the interests of the United States.

I am truly honored by the opportunity to appear before this Committee today. I have spent hundreds of hours in this room, but this is my first time in this seat. For more than a decade, I worked for Senator Feinstein and Senator Nelson, and sat on the staff benches behind the dais. From that experience, I have a deep appreciation for the vital role that this Committee plays in the conduct and oversight of our Nation's foreign policy. If confirmed, I look forward to close cooperation and consultation with the Members and staff of this Committee and with the Congress as we pursue our shared commitment to strengthening our close and unbreakable relationship with the State of Israel.

I am grateful to Senator Nelson for his introduction, and for his support and guidance over the past decade. I owe much of my professional development to the opportunities he gave me. And I thank Senator Lieberman, with whom I have worked closely on our shared commitment to the closest of U.S.-Israel relations. I am grateful to him for coming here today and for his support and introduction.

Mr. Chairman, my own interaction with Israel has taken many forms over the years, each of which has helped me gain a greater appreciation of the unique experience and perspective of the Israeli people. I first went to Israel at the age of four. My parents, who were academics, took our family there for a six-month sabbatical. It was 1973, and I was there during the Yom Kippur War. There were air raid sirens, followed by hours spent in bomb shelters. I saw soldiers driving through the streets on their way to the front. This was very different from my life in Illinois, where we never experienced such visible and vivid threats to our security and way of life. I remember, at the same time, our family enjoying many examples of the warmth and generosity of the Israeli people, from the Israeli schools my siblings and I attended to long hours spent together with other families in our Jerusalem neighborhood.

I returned to Israel after high school and again during college. In 1988, as the country was reeling from the violence of the first intifada, rocks rained down on the bus I took to Hebrew University and my Israeli classmates intensely debated the meaning of these events for their country's future.

As a Congressional staffer, I traveled to Israel as the hopes born of the Oslo Accords made peace seem within reach, celebrated the signing of the peace treaty with Jordan, mourned the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin days after he had returned to Israel from Washington, and worked to address the threats posed to our nations by Hamas and Hizballah.

As my professional involvement with Israel has deepened, so too has my understanding of Israel's security needs and its people's justifiable concerns about Iran's nuclear weapons program, suicide bombers, missile attacks from Hamas and Hizballah, and the ongoing efforts of some to delegitimize the Jewish state. But I have also grown more keenly aware of Israel's deep-rooted strengths and its people's dreams – manifested in the building of a modern state, the flowering of Jewish culture and democracy, the Start-up Nation, and the unrelenting search for peace.

The United States has stood by Israel as its partner and ally from the first minutes of its creation, and I have been proud to serve President Obama as he has continued, deepened, and advanced that relationship.

In a region beset by wars, terror, and autocracy, and in which we have much at stake, Israel has been our most dependable ally. Our militaries train together and learn from one another. We share critical intelligence to counter the threats of terrorist organizations that target the United States and the West, as well as Israel. Our economies have grown progressively more intertwined, particularly in the high-tech and renewable energy sectors. And, perhaps most importantly, we share the fundamental tenets of open and democratic societies.

The United States' security relationship with Israel has strengthened and deepened under President Obama. Our commitment to ensuring Israel's Qualitative Military Edge is reflected in our security assistance, joint exercises, and an extraordinarily close level of consultation and cooperation at the highest levels of our civilian and military leaderships. The Congress is our partner in this commitment, fulfilling the President's request to fully fund Israel's Foreign Military Financing even in tight budgetary times.

As a candidate, President Obama went to Sderot and saw a community damaged by rockets and people living in fear of the next attack. As President, he acted to see that Israeli defenses were significantly strengthened. With Congress' full support, there has been tangible and important success in the joint development of missile defense technologies. The Arrow missile defense program provides Israel with a significant strategic missile defense capability. More recently, the Iron Dome short-range missile defense system successfully intercepted several rockets fired from Gaza last month. The additional \$205 million the President requested and Congress provided for this program will help produce and deploy additional Iron Dome batteries to protect Israeli civilian lives in northern and southern Israel. If confirmed, I will work to provide continued support for U.S.-Israeli missile defense cooperation.

Our security relationship also encompasses close coordination on the threat posed by Iran's nuclear program. President Obama is determined to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, and has dramatically ramped up pressure on Iran, passing in the U.N. Security Council the most sweeping and biting international sanctions ever enacted to increase Iran's isolation and cut off sources of funds and resources to advance their missile and nuclear programs. Israel is a key partner in that effort, supporting the strong sanctions contained in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1929 and the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act. If

confirmed, I will seek to intensify our regular consultations, in which we share assessments and exchange ideas on ways to increase international pressure on Iran.

Defending Israel's security also means fighting attempts to delegitimize Israel. The Obama Administration's record is one of unshakeable opposition to this campaign. We've been steadfast in our opposition to anti-Israel resolutions in the U.N. Human Rights Council, the General Assembly, the Security Council and other UN bodies; we withdrew from the Durban Review Conference in 2009; and we've supported Israel's right to defend itself in consideration of the deeply flawed Goldstone report.

Our agenda with Israel in these international fora is not purely defensive – we are working to ensure that Israel receives full and equal treatment in all international organizations. Israel has much to offer the world, and the United Nations and other international organizations would benefit from Israeli capabilities and expertise. If confirmed, one of my goals will be to work with the Israeli government to identify further opportunities for Israeli participation in the international civil service, across the UN system, and in the governance of the bodies they serve.

Economic ties between the United States and Israel are also at their highest levels ever. As Silicon Valley taps into the amazing Israeli high-tech talent pool and start-up culture, we see an astonishing \$32.3 billion in bilateral trade, despite the global economic slowdown. The Department of Energy and the Government of Israel have just renewed the bilateral Agreement that frames our joint research program on alternative energy, which promises to further enhance our ties in technology cooperation. If confirmed, I will work hard to expand these successes in areas such as energy production, green technologies, and defense and aerospace technologies.

No commitment to Israel's security is complete without absolute dedication to achieving a comprehensive peace between Israel and all its neighbors. The peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan, which have brought so much stability to the region, are vital and must be protected and strengthened. The Obama Administration believes that a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is essential to safeguarding Israel's future as a secure, Jewish, democratic state, as well as achieving the Palestinian people's legitimate aspirations for independence in a viable state of their own. It is also fundamentally in the United States' own interest.

We have been consistent and clear in our call for direct negotiations as the only way to achieve this goal, and we have consistently opposed unilateral actions by either side that would prejudice a negotiated settlement.

We are closely following developments regarding the announced agreement between Fatah and Hamas. Many of the details remain unclear, and its implementation is uncertain. What is clear, however, is that Hamas is a terrorist organization which targets civilians and calls for the destruction of Israel. To play a constructive role in achieving peace, any Palestinian government that emerges must renounce violence, abide by past agreements, and recognize Israel's right to exist. As we have said many times, the United States strongly supports Palestinian reconciliation, but it must be on terms that support the cause of peace.

Mr. Chairman, it has been a deep honor to be part of President Obama's team working on these complex and critically important issues. If confirmed by the Senate to be the United States Ambassador to Israel, I will work to the best of my abilities to further strengthen and deepen the excellent cooperation and communication that already exists between our nations, as we work together toward a more peaceful, stable, democratic, and prosperous Middle East.

Thank you for your attention, and I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.