

Remarks by Vice President Pence at the 2019 AIPAC Policy Conference

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Remarks

Foreign Policy

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THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, hello, AIPAC! (Applause.) Thank you for that warm welcome. What an amazing turnout. And how about a round of applause for the great AIPAC team that put this extraordinary 2019 Policy Conference together? (Applause.) AIPAC President Mort Fridman, and my good friend, Howard Kohr. (Applause.)

To members of Congress, Israeli ministers, members of the Knesset, to the 18,000 friends of Israel who have come from near and far: It is great to be back at AIPAC, the largest gathering of pro-Israel Americans in the United States. (Applause.)

And speaking of pro-Israel Americans, allow me to bring greetings from a friend of mine — (laughter) — and someone history has already proven to be the greatest friend of the Jewish people and the State of Israel ever to sit in the Oval Office of the White House. I bring greetings from the 45th President of the United States of America, President Donald Trump. (Applause.)

We gather here today as Americans to speak about the progress that we've made and the strength of our alliance with our most cherished ally. But I just have to say yesterday was a great day for our country, our President, and every American who cherishes the truth. (Applause.)

After two years of investigation and reckless accusations by many Democrats and members of the media, the Special Counsel confirmed what President Trump said along: There was no collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia during the 2016 election. And the Attorney General confirmed there was no obstruction of justice. (Applause.)

Make no mistake about it, my fellow Americans: This was total vindication of the President of the United States and our campaign, and it should be welcomed by every American. And even if some Democrats want to spend more time on discredited allegations, the American people can be confident the President and I are going to

continue to focus where we always have — on the issues that are most important to our country: on a stronger and more prosperous America and on a safer world. And that's exactly what we've done since the first day of this administration. (Applause.)

I mean, think about it: President Trump promised to rebuild our military, and he signed into law the largest investment in our national defense since the days of Ronald Reagan. (Applause.)

With that renewed American strength, he promised to take the fight to radical Islamic terrorism, on our terms, on their soil. And as the Department of Defense confirmed Friday, thanks to the courage of our armed forces and our partners in the region, the last inch of ground controlled by the Islamic State in Syria has been captured. (Applause.)

Five years after ISIS controlled nearly 35,000 square miles in Syria and Iraq, and nearly 5 million people lived under their brutal regime, the ISIS caliphate is no more. (Applause.)

President Trump also promised to revive the American economy, to cut taxes, to roll back regulation, and unleash American energy. And he did it. (Applause.)

Since Election Day, we've created 5.3 million new jobs. The unemployment rate has hit a 50-year low. And more Americans are working today than ever before in the history of the United States. (Applause.)

No matter how you measure it — record jobs growth, record investment, record employment — the American economy is once again the envy of the world. President Donald Trump is a man of his word, and with respect to our most cherished ally, he's more been more than a man of his word. (Applause.) Under President Donald Trump, if the world knows nothing else, the world knows this: America stands with Israel. (Applause.)

You know, it's the greatest honor of my life to serve as Vice President alongside a President who cares so deeply about the state of Israel. Thanks to the President's leadership, our alliance has never been stronger. Our friendship has never been deeper.

We stand with Israel today for the same reasons the American people have always stood with Israel. We stand with Israel because her cause is our cause, her values are our values, and her fight is our fight. (Applause.) We stand with Israel because we believe in right over wrong, in good over evil, in liberty over tyranny. We stand with Israel today, tomorrow, and we always will. (Applause.)

But it's not just been talk. President Trump promised that Israel will have the resources and tools to defend itself, by itself. And, today, in the wake of the rocket attack near Tel Aviv, I'm proud to report that American support for the security of the state of Israel has never been stronger. (Applause.) And the military of the state of Israel is stronger than ever before. (Applause.)

President Trump also promised to shut down the PLO office in Washington if the Palestinian Authority refused to take immediate steps to stop funding terrorists who murder innocent Israeli civilians with American tax dollars. And when the PLO refused, President Trump shut their office down. (Applause.) And today, thanks to so many of you, the Taylor Force Act is the law of the land. (Applause.)

And when President Trump promised to cut off funding to anti-Israel agencies at the United Nations, he meant it. (Applause.) And last year, the United States ended all U.S. contributions to UNRWA. (Applause.)

Beyond all that, the President promised to stand up to the world's leading state sponsor of terror, and he withdrew the United States of America from the disastrous nuclear deal with Iran. (Applause.) There'll be no more pallets of cash to the mullahs in Iran! (Applause.)

And last year, President Trump did what no American President before him had the courage to do when he moved the American embassy to Jerusalem, the capital of the state of Israel. (Applause.)

And as though all this wasn't enough, as Prime Minister Netanyahu said just last week, "He did it again." (Applause.)

You know, for 20 years after Israel's rebirth, Syria held the Golan Heights. And with its massive artillery, it held Israel hostage. This crucial region changed hands only after Israel won a war that was forced upon her.

Years later, when Israel's enemies attacked her on the holiest day of the Jewish year, thousands of patriots stepped up to defend their homeland, including a young tank commander who singlehandedly kept a fleet of enemy tanks at bay, the great Zvika Greengold. (Applause.)

It's an amazing story. Late one night, all alone on the Tapline Route, as enemy tanks rolled into Israel, a miracle happened. Captain Greengold moved his lone tank back and forth in the darkness, firing in different directions to confound and delay a far larger enemy force. His actions not only helped turn the tide of the battle in Israel's favor; they secured the Golan Heights from enemy control and, with it, saved the state of Israel from the brink of disaster. (Applause.)

But for generations, leaders have recognized the Golan Heights are critical to the strategic security of the state of Israel. But President Trump took action. And today, for the first time in 52 years, with Prime Minister Netanyahu at his side, the President of the United States will formally recognize Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights. (Applause.)

Our President made these decisions in the best interest of the United States. But he also believed they were in the best interest of peace, because a lasting peace can only be built on a foundation of truth. So we will work for peace, and we will pray for the peace of Jerusalem that those who love her will be secure.

And peace cannot be imposed. To be lasting and to be real, peace must be negotiated. But peace can only be negotiated with partners who are committed to peace. And today's rocket attack by Hamas proves that Hamas is not a partner for peace. Hamas is a terrorist organization that seeks the destruction of Israel. And the United States will never negotiate with terrorist Hamas. (Applause.)

And while any peace will undoubtedly require compromise, you can be confident of this: The United States of America will never compromise the safety and security of the state of Israel. (Applause.)

In February, it was my great honor, along with my wife, Karen, to travel to Poland on the President's behalf. We represented the United States at an unprecedented gathering of leaders from more than 60 nations — leaders who sat down and openly discussed their joint commitment to peace and security in the Middle East. It was a remarkable gathering.

And it was amazing to see leaders from across the region agree that the greatest threat to peace and security in the Middle East is the Islamic Republic of Iran. (Applause.)

You know, the President's critics predicted disaster when he withdrew from the Iran deal, but the so-called Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action didn't prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. It merely delayed the day when that vile regime would gain access to the world's deadliest weapons.

Since then, the United States has implemented a maximum-pressure campaign to change Iran's malign behavior and hold the regime accountable for its destructive actions. And the campaign is working.

The Iranian people are protesting against the regime. The Iranian economy is reeling under unprecedented U.S. sanctions. And now Iran must choose between caring for its people and continuing to fund its proxies who destabilize the region and threaten Israel. The Iranian regime openly advocates another Holocaust and seeks the means to achieve it.

But I can assure you, under President Donald Trump's leadership, America will continue to stand strong. We will continue to oppose Iran's malign influence. And under this President, America will never allow Iran to obtain a nuclear weapon. (Applause.)

Now, when authoritarian regimes breathe out vile, anti-Semitic hatred and threats of violence, history teaches that we must take them at their word.

Last month, Karen and I stood and prayed at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Nazi death camp in Poland. It was a deeply moving experience.

As we walked about those deserted grounds, as I looked at the gas chambers, the piles of suitcases, the piles of little shoes, it reinforced my resolve that our answer to this unspeakable tragedy for this and every generation must be: "Never again." Never again. Never again! (Applause.)

Now, my friends, we've reached a fateful moment in our history. All over the world, anti-Semitism is on the rise — on college campuses, in the marketplace, even in the halls of Congress.

You know, there was a time when support for Israel was not a partisan issue here in Washington. I'll never forget the day in 2007 that I, a conservative Christian Republican, was asked to co-found the Congressional Anti-Semitism Task Force by the only Holocaust survivor ever to serve in Congress — the Democrat Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the late and great Tom Lantos. (Applause.)

Support for Israel, as was reflected in that moment when Chairman Lantos came by my office, has been a long and bipartisan tradition in the Congress, spanning generations.

But how things have changed. It's astonishing to think that the party of Harry Truman, which did so much to help create the State of Israel, has been co-opted by people who promote rank, anti-Semitic rhetoric, and work to undermine the broad American consensus of support for Israel.

Recently, a freshman Democrat in Congress trafficked in repeated anti-Semitic tropes; alleged congressional support for Israel reflected an "allegiance to a foreign country." Said that Israel had, and I quote, "hypnotized the world." And she accused Americans who support Israel of being bought off by campaign contributions.

Anti-Semitism has no place in the Congress of the United States of America. (Applause.) And, at a minimum, anyone who slanders those who support this historic alliance between the United States and Israel should never have a seat on the Foreign Affairs Committee of the United States House of Representatives. (Applause.)

The party that has been the home of so many American Jews for so long today struggled to muster the votes to unequivocally condemn anti-Semitism in a resolution.

You know, as governor of Indiana, I was proud to sign the toughest anti-BDS legislation of any state in the Union. (Applause.) But remarkably, today, all but one Democrat running for President voted against the Combatting BDS Act in the United States Senate. And as I stand before you, eight Democratic candidates for President are actually boycotting this very conference.

So let me be clear on this point: Anyone who aspires to the highest office in the land should not be afraid to stand with the strongest supporters of Israel in America. (Applause.) It is wrong to boycott Israel, and it is wrong boycott AIPAC. (Applause.)

President Trump and I couldn't be more proud to stand with all of you today, tomorrow, and always, to strengthen the ties that bind America and Israel. We here, in the United States, admire Israel and her success. In fact, we marvel at it.

The Jewish people have turned the desert into a garden, scarcity into plenty, sickness into health. They've turned hope into a future of security and prosperity. A tiny land — a land with no natural resources, no rushing rivers or verdant valleys. A nation that, despite not

knowing a single day of true peace, has in two short generations become one of the world's most vibrant and successful nations. Israel is an inspiration to the world. (Applause.)

And the United States of America is proud to stand with Israel and her people as allies and cherished friends. Providence entrusted the United States to be the guardian of liberty, and that's a trust we will never forsake. That they shall sit, every man and woman "under his vine and under his fig tree, and that none shall make them afraid," shall be our anthem. (Applause.)

Ladies and gentlemen, Israel and the United States will always stand together because America and Israel are more than friends. We're more than partners or allies. My friends, the United States and Israel are family. (Applause.) We're *mishpucha*. (Applause.) We are a family, descended from a common tradition of faith. We're a family that upholds common values. And together, we share a common destiny.

The American-Israeli alliance is stronger than ever. Our friendship is greater than ever. And together, our future can only be brighter.

And as President Trump has pledged: Our administration will always stand with our cherished friend and partner, the State of Israel.

And so thank you. Thank you for the honor of addressing you today and for your support. It is the greatest honor of my life to serve as your Vice President at such a time as this. And I thank you. (Applause.)

But permit me to close with a blessing to all my fellow Americans who love this country, and to all those gathered here who cherish Israel and the people of Israel:

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May His countenance shine upon you and be gracious unto you. And may all your ways be paths of peace.

With the unwavering support of all of you and all of those who call these two great nations home, with the leadership of President Donald Trump, and with God's help, I know the best days for Israel and the United States of America are yet to come. (Applause.) Thank you.

God bless you. God bless Israel. And God bless the United States of America.

END

11:58 A.M. EDT