

Hillary Clinton Insists the U.S. Must Stand With This Middle Eastern Nation

During a speech Monday before the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's spring policy conference, Democrat presidential candidate Hillary Clinton didn't spare anything in her criticisms of both Iran and Republican front-runner Donald Trump.

The speech before an audience that included a number of key pro-Israel lobbyists and fund-raisers, as well as a large contingent from Congress, drew a standing ovation. AIPAC is the nation's leading advocate for pro-Israel policies in Washington, D.C.

Clinton opened her speech by referencing her service as a senator representing New York, as well as her time as secretary of state. She said that while she and AIPAC rank-and-file membership may have disagreed on specific policy proposals, she believed they shared an "unwavering, unshakable commitment to our alliance and to Israel's future as a secure and democratic homeland for the Jewish people."

"I know that all of you understand what's at stake in this election," she said. "Our next president will walk into the Oval Office next January and immediately face a world of both perils we must meet with strength and skill, and opportunities we must seize and build on.

"The next president will sit down at that desk and start making decisions that will affect both the lives and livelihoods of every American, and the security of our friends around the world. So we have to get this right."

Clinton then said it would be a "serious mistake" for the U.S.

to “abandon” its responsibilities with regard to Israel. She said Americans cannot “cede the mantle of leadership for global peace and security” to any other country.

She then laid out three “evolving threats” that Israel now faces:

- Iran’s continued aggression
- The rising tide of “extremism across a wide arc of instability”
- Growing efforts to delegitimize Israel on the world stage

She said the convergence of those issues makes the alliance “more indispensable than ever” and that the two nations must combat all these trends with even more intense security and diplomatic cooperation. They must be “closer than ever, stronger than ever, and more determined than ever” to prevail against common adversaries and to advance what she called “our shared values.”

“This is especially true at a time when Israel faces brutal terrorist stabbings, shootings and vehicle attacks at home,” she said. “Parents worry about letting their children walk down the street. Families live in fear.”

Clinton then referenced the murder of U.S. Military Academy graduate Taylor Force by a Palestinian terrorist near Jaffa a few weeks ago. She said Palestinian leaders needed to “stop inciting violence, stop celebrating terrorists as martyrs and stop paying rewards to their families.”

She said one of her first acts, if elected, would be to invite Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the Oval Office to discuss expanding cooperation beyond security matters. One area she said she would seek better collaboration is between U.S. and Israeli technology firms, leading to a repudiation of the “BDS” movement.

"Many of the young people here today are on the front lines of the battle to oppose the alarming boycott, divestment and sanctions movement known as BDS," she said. "Particularly at a time when anti-Semitism is on the rise across the world, especially in Europe, we must repudiate all efforts to malign, isolate and undermine Israel and the Jewish people.

"I've been sounding the alarm for a while now. As I wrote last year in a letter to the heads of major American Jewish organizations, we have to be united in fighting back against BDS. Many of its proponents have demonized Israeli scientists and intellectuals, even students.

"To all the college students who may have encountered this on campus, I hope you stay strong. Keep speaking out. Don't let anyone silence you, bully you or try to shut down debate, especially in places of learning like colleges and universities.

"Anti-Semitism has no place in any civilized society, not in America, not in Europe, not anywhere."

Clinton then went into a thinly-veiled attack on Republican front-runner Donald Trump, saying Israel cannot afford to have a president who isn't a respected global leader, committed to defending and advancing the international order. The alternative to an America able to block efforts to isolate or attack Israel, she said, was "unthinkable."

"We need steady hands, not a president who says he's neutral on Monday, pro-Israel on Tuesday, and who knows what on Wednesday, because everything's negotiable," she said. "Well, my friends, Israel's security is non-negotiable ...

"We can't be neutral when rockets rain down on residential neighborhoods, when civilians are stabbed in the street, when suicide bombers target the innocent. Some things aren't negotiable. And anyone who doesn't understand that has no business being our president."

Clinton then turned her attention to Iran, saying she “led the diplomacy to impose crippling sanctions and force Iran to the negotiating table.” She also voiced her support for the Iran nuclear deal, which Netanyahu, Trump and fellow GOP candidate U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz have all strongly opposed, saying it “put a lid” on the Islamic republic’s clandestine nuclear program.

“Today Iran’s enriched uranium is all but gone, thousands of centrifuges have stopped spinning, Iran’s potential breakout time has increased and new verification measures are in place to help us deter and detect any cheating,” she said. “I really believe the United States, Israel and the world are safer as a result.

“But still, as I laid out at a speech at the Brookings Institution last year, it’s not good enough to trust and verify. Our approach must be distrust and verify.

“This deal must come with vigorous enforcement, strong monitoring, clear consequences for any violations and a broader strategy to confront Iran’s aggression across the region. We cannot forget that Tehran’s fingerprints are on nearly every conflict across the Middle East, from Syria to Lebanon to Yemen.

“The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and its proxies are attempting to establish a position on the Golan from which to threaten Israel, and they continue to fund Palestinian terrorists. In Lebanon, Hezbollah is amassing an arsenal of increasingly sophisticated rockets and artillery that well may be able to hit every city in Israel.

“Tonight, you will hear a lot of rhetoric from the other candidates about Iran, but there’s a big difference between talking about holding Tehran accountable and actually doing it. Our next president has to be able to hold together our global coalition and impose real consequences for even the smallest violations of this agreement.”