

Ted Cruz: 'Today, We Are Re-Living History'

As the final speaker among the presidential candidates who addressed the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's spring policy conference in Washington, D.C., U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) used his speech to make up for the FOX News debate that had been canceled Monday evening.

And he started right out of the gate by taking a swipe at his primary Republican rival, businessman Donald Trump, who spoke just ahead of him. "Palestine has not existed since 1948," he noted, suggesting it might come as a surprise to Trump.

He then turned to the upcoming Jewish celebration of Purim.

"On Wednesday night of this week, in synagogues across the world, Jewish people will read the Megillah, which tells the story of Purim, the miraculous rescue of the Jewish people from the hands of a wicked Persian king," he said. "When the evildoer Haman plots to kill the Jews, he describes them as a nation that is scattered and spread out. The Talmud teaches that the Jewish people at the time were divided amongst themselves, and the lesson is that when the forces of good are divided evil can prevail, but when we come together in unity, together we can defeat tyrants.

"Today we are reliving history, facing a similar time of challenge for America and for Israel. But today I give you a word of hope.

"In the next few months we will bring this country together, first by unifying the Republican party and then by reaching out and building a coalition of young people and Hispanics and African-Americans and women and blue-collar workers and Jewish voters and Reagan Democrats, which will lead to a commanding victory in November that unifies this country and brings us

together. And standing together, America will stand with Israel and defeat radical Islamic terrorism.”

Cruz then thanked the more than 18,000 in attendance, and noted they would play a “critical leadership role” in making his plans come to fruition. He also noted his former campaign rival, U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) had hosted an event earlier in the day at AIPAC to raise funds for his campaign.

“[That] should allay any doubt anyone might have that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob can still do miracles,” he quipped, drawing a round of laughter from the audience.

The Texas senator then recognized fellow Texan Taylor Force, a West Point graduate and Army veteran, who was stabbed to death last week by a Palestinian terrorist in Israel. He noted the murder was “yet another reminder” that the U.S. and Israel are “in the fight together” against Islamist attacks.

“We need a president who will be a champion for America, and we need a president who will be a champion for Israel,” he said. “In my time in the Senate, I have endeavored to do both.”

Cruz then spoke about his frequent visits to Israel, where he saw the doctors at Ziv Medical Center in the northern part of the country, which had treated more than 1,000 Syrian refugees. He also discussed his successful efforts to block Iran from appointing a known terrorist, Hamid Aboutalebi, as its permanent representative to the United Nations.

He also noted that when Israel was facing “relentless rocket attacks” from Hamas, he agreed with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who noted his nation was using missile defense to protect its civilians while the Islamist group was using civilians to protect their missiles. He then turned the example into an opportunity to attack Democrat front-runner Hillary Clinton’s position at the time.

"I would note that Hillary Clinton in 2014 explained this is follows, ' Hamas puts its missiles, its rockets, in civilian areas. Part of it is because Gaza is pretty small and it's densely populated,'" he said. "Well, Madam Secretary, with all respect, the reason the missiles are in schools is not because Gaza is small. The reason the missiles are in schools is because Hamas are terrorist monsters using children as human shields."

Cruz then described his response, working with U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) to author a resolution condemning Hamas' use of human shields as a war crime. That resolution passed both houses of Congress unanimously.

He also noted his response to the Obama Administration's temporary ban on civilian airline flights to Israel, noting that the pressure from his office and others quickly ended the ban. Looking forward, he said, he would lead "very very differently" as president.

"Imagine just a few years ago if I had come to an AIPAC conference and suggested that the prime minister of Israel was going to come to America to address a joint session of Congress, and that he would be boycotted by the president the United States, the vice president of the United States, and every member of the Cabinet," he added. "That would have been dismissed as, 'Crazy,' 'Fanciful,' 'That could never happen,' and sadly that is exactly what did happen when Prime Minister Netanyahu came to address Congress."

Cruz then went back on the attack against Trump, whose earlier speech had elicited several standing ovations, repeating earlier claims that the GOP front-runner would be "neutral between Israel and the Palestinians," and that he would "negotiate a better deal" with Iran. He said if Iran fired a test missile while he was president, the U.S. would "shoot that missile down."

"In January 2017, we will have a commander in chief who says, 'Under no circumstances will Iran be allowed to acquire nuclear weapons. Either you will shut down your nuclear program or we will shut it down for you,'" he said. "I am convinced after this election, the American people will stand and say together, 'Never again means never again.'"

Like Trump, Cruz pledged to move the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, saying he would begin that effort on his first day in office. He said the principle difference between him and other politicians who have made similar pledges in the past, including the Republican front-runner, was that he would actually follow through on the pledge.

He further promised to cut access to federal funding to any group, organization, school or university that provides support to the boycott-divestment-sanctions movement. He added that those in the BDS movement who engage in illegal behavior will be "prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

"All of us here understand that Israel is not a barrier to peace, it is the Palestinian Authority and a so-called unity government with Hamas that celebrates the murder of women and children and incites and even compensates the terrorist attacks," he said. "If the Palestinians try to push through a United Nations resolution to unilaterally declare Palestinian statehood, America will veto that resolution. Indeed I tell you today I will fly to New York to personally veto it myself."

Cruz concluded his speech by explaining "why on earth" a Cuban-American Texan would become one of the leading defenders of Israel in Congress. He said there are several reasons, including:

- standing with Israel benefits America because Israel is a liberal democracy that shares our values; and
- Israel is a steadfast and loyal ally and our military

aid to Israel is not charity it is rather furthering the vital national security interests of the United States of America.

He said much of his view of Israel is framed by his family's story, leading to a discussion of his father's early years in Cuba prior to the island nation's communist revolution and subsequent efforts to find the American Dream. There is one other nation on earth like the United States of America, he added, that was created as an oasis—"a beacon of hope"—to people who had faced depression, murder and persecution.

"The nation of Israel, like America, is a beacon of light unto the world, and all of us here understand, as Ronald Reagan did, that peace is achievable only through strength," he said. "This is what Israel understands: When you are surrounded by neighbors who would drive you into the sea, somehow you don't have time for political correctness. Weakness is provocative; appeasement increases the chance of military conflict.

"Indeed, I believe this Iranian nuclear deal is Munich in 1938, and we risk once again catastrophic consequences to allowing a homicidal maniac to acquire the tools to murder millions. The way to avoid conflict is to stand up to bullies, and it is worth remembering that this same nation, Iran, in 1981 released our hostages the day Ronald Reagan was sworn into office.

"That is the difference a strong commander in chief can make men and together, standing as one, we can and will do it again."