Remarks by National Security Advisor Ambassador John Bolton to the Zionist Organization of America

November 5, 2018

The White House

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-ambassador-john-bolton-zionist-organization-america/>

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador John Bolton on November 4, 2018.

New York City

Thank you, Ingeborg, for your kind introduction. We are all deeply grateful to you and Ira for your devoted service to so many important causes.

I also want to thank Mort Klein for the invitation to speak at this year’s dinner. For twenty-five years now, Mort has served as national president of this outstanding organization, leading with extraordinary courage, vision, and pride. Thank you, Mort.

I am truly humbled to receive ZOA’s Dr. Miriam and Sheldon Adelson Award for Defense of Israel.

This organization has long served as a staunch advocate for the Jewish state, for the Jewish people, and for a strong U.S.-Israeli partnership. It is a true privilege to attend this dinner and to have the opportunity to address all of you.

In September, President Trump and I were here in New York City for his speech to the United Nations General Assembly. During his remarks, the President made clear that the United States has embarked on a new foreign policy course.

We are no longer apologizing for defending our national interests and our sovereignty.

We are calling out our enemies, and standing by our friends.

We are preventing foreign bureaucrats from dictating our means of self-defense and attacking our partners.

Gone are the days when the United States sold out our allies, appeased murderous regimes, and tiptoed around obvious facts in the name of political correctness.

As President Trump has repeatedly said, America is being respected again.

We saw the results of renewed American leadership last year when the President officially recognized Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.

The United States has since moved our embassy to its rightful home in the Holy City.

I was honored to visit our new embassy site in August during a trip to Israel, where my team and I had more than a dozen meetings with Israeli officials, starting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

As you know, the historic American embassy move was long overdue.

In relocating the embassy, President Trump accomplished what other leaders had repeatedly promised, but consistently failed to deliver.

This important decision did more than simply acknowledge a clear reality on the ground. It did more than merely shift our principal diplomatic activities from Israel’s coast to the heart of the Holy Land. This decision, without a doubt, showed the world that the United States will once again stand for what is right and just.

We will not sacrifice Israel’s security to garner praise at all the right cocktail parties, in all the wrong corners of the world.

Under this administration, we will support and champion our trusted ally—a thriving democracy in the Middle East—and our truest friend.

In June, we withdrew from the anti-Israel United Nations Human Rights Council.

For decades, the U.N. Human Rights Council, and its equally corrupt predecessor—the U.N. Human Rights Commission—devoted most of their time to criticizing Israel, not to mention the United States, while shielding the world’s most egregious human rights abusers.

In 2006, I cast the U.S. vote against establishing the supposedly reformed U.N. Human Rights Council. It was one of the proudest votes I cast at the U.N. At that time, I warned Member States that the Council we created would become our legacy.

In the years ahead, we would be judged on whether we established a “U.N. human rights machinery that was effective and strong.” An overwhelming U.N. General Assembly majority ignored our objections, and you can see the results today.

Since that day twelve years ago, despite repeated U.S. calls for reform, the U.N. Human Rights Council has continued to welcome and enable the world’s worst human rights violators.

As our administration declared in June, the Human Rights Council is unworthy of its name. Today, I want to be clear, this Council is also unworthy of American membership. It was unworthy in 2006, and it didn’t get any better with age.

From now on, U.S. participation in international institutions will be conditioned on the organization’s effectiveness and on whether or not it serves U.S. interests and the interests of our allies.

As the President announced to the U.N. General Assembly, the United States is working to shift more of our U.N. funding from assessed to voluntary contributions in order to target the most effective programs directly.

We will ensure that American resources and support advance American objectives and goals.

For similar reasons, on the eve of September 11th this year, I announced that the United States will not engage, fund, or support the International Criminal Court in any way.

We will not cooperate. We will provide no assistance. And, we certainly will not join.

The ICC is an illegitimate, unaccountable, and unconstitutional foreign bureaucracy that has the audacity to consider asserting jurisdiction over American and Israeli citizens without their consent.

The Court is flawed at its core, and we will let it die on its own.

The ICC’s fundamental purpose is not, as claimed, to punish and deter horrific human rights atrocities.

On this count, the Court has been an utter disgrace, spending more than $1.5 billion dollars, while achieving only eight convictions.

Atrocities continue unabated in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya—and in many other areas—despite ongoing ICC investigations. The world’s monstrous dictators and despots are not deterred by The Hague’s toiling bureaucrats and robed judges. What a surprise!

The ICC’s real purpose is of course not to punish these perpetrators, but to constrain the foreign policies of the United States and our allies like Israel.

The Court claims jurisdiction for ambiguously defined crimes in order to intimidate leaders in both countries, who strive to defend their nations from myriad threats every single day.

As usual, Israel has been the canary in the coal mine for the ICC’s corruption, revealing the Court’s dangerous overreach and true, though concealed, ambitions.

While the ICC has gladly welcomed the membership of the so-called “State of Palestine,” it has threatened to investigate Israeli housing projects, and it has targeted Israeli actions against terrorists in the West Bank and Gaza.

In November of last year, the ICC Prosecutor also requested to investigate alleged war crimes supposedly committed by U.S. service members and intelligence professionals during the war in Afghanistan.

This outcome was entirely predictable. First, the global governance apostles go after Israel. Then, they come for the United States.

It is fully apparent that the ICC wants U.S. and Israeli leaders to think twice before taking action to protect their people from terrorism and other threats.

In September, reflecting congressional concerns with Palestinian attempts to provoke an ICC investigation of Israel, the United States announced the closure of the Palestine Liberation Organization office in Washington.

We will not consider reopening this office until the Palestinians take steps to start direct and meaningful negotiations with Israel on the peace process.

We have likewise cut funding for the Palestinian Authority, which must immediately cease its despicable practice of paying terrorists and their families for murdering innocent Israeli men, women, and children.

Until it does, the United States will not risk the chance that U.S. taxpayer dollars could be used as bounties for terrorists.

We have also defunded the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, “UNRWA,” which failed to use generous American funding effectively to help those in need, thereby inhibiting progress toward peace.

The United States continues to support a robust peace process and direct negotiations between all parties.

Of course, we know that the primary obstacle to enduring peace and stability in the Middle East is none other than the murderous Iranian dictatorship in Tehran.

The ayatollahs steal from their people to fund their worldwide campaign of chaos, destruction, and bloodshed.

The regime has long been the world’s central banker for terrorism, and it remains the leading state sponsor of terror to this day.

Over the decades, Iran has kidnapped, tortured, and murdered American and Israeli citizens. It has attacked our embassies, and targeted our service members.

The mullahs proudly chant “Death to America” and “Death to Israel.” At least we are in good company.

This brutal dictatorship can never be allowed to acquire a nuclear weapon.

For this reason, earlier this year President Trump withdrew the United States from the disastrous Iran Nuclear Deal.

This deal was by far the worst diplomatic fiasco in American history.

It was based on the tragic fallacy that a handshake, and a wink, between self-styled global elites is sufficient protection for millions of innocent lives around the world.

The State of Israel was founded in the wake of the worst atrocities known to man.

The lessons of appeasement are deeply engrained in all those who understand this important history and are determined to prevent the mistakes of the past.

Our solemn pledge, “Never Again,” will mean nothing if we allow a regime that calls for the total annihilation of Israel to possess the world’s deadliest weapons.

Not on our watch.

We remember the dangers of naïve hopes, and unenforceable promises. Unfortunately, the deal’s negotiators clearly did not.

The 2015 Iran Nuclear Deal failed to permanently block all paths to an Iranian nuclear bomb. Further, its negotiators failed to secure any restrictions on Iran’s other destabilizing activities, including the regime’s ballistic missile development and proliferation.

Earlier this year, we saw undeniable proof of what we had long known: the 2015 agreement was built on a flat lie, the absurd claim that the Iranian regime desired only a peaceful nuclear program.

In April, Israeli intelligence proved once and for all that Iran had long pursued nuclear weapons, and that it had lied about it repeatedly to the United States and the world.

Unsurprisingly, since this horrible deal was reached, the Iranian regime’s aggression has only increased.

Iran’s military budget has ballooned by nearly forty percent.

The regime is funneling billions of dollars into horrific violence in Gaza, Iraq, Yemen, and Syria.

The mullahs have also used their new funds from the deal to build and proliferate missiles throughout the region.

U.S. intelligence clearly shows that Iran is actively enhancing its missile systems and technologies. The regime has advanced its precision-strike capability, its anti-ship targeting abilities, and its potential missile target sets.

Iran obtains critical missile components and supplies through vast networks of agents and front companies all over the world.

In recent months, we know that the regime has been working with suppliers in Asia and Europe to acquire numerous electronic components, metals, and other materials, including sophisticated European and U.S. equipment.

Iran has spread these dangerous weapons across the Middle East and beyond, including into Syria, where they can be used to threaten Israel. Already this year, Iranian forces have used bases inside Syria to launch attacks against the Golan Heights and Israeli service members.

As the world’s leading state sponsor of terrorism, Iran also remains the primary patron of numerous terrorist proxies and militias, including Hezbollah and Hamas.

Over the years, Tehran has financed and facilitated countless terrorist activities. Last month, Danish authorities arrested an Iranian agent for plotting an assassination on Danish soil. This past summer, several Iranian diplomats were arrested for masterminding a bomb plot in Paris. And in August, two Iranian agents, residents of the United States, were arrested by the FBI and charged with surveilling American citizens and Israeli and Jewish facilities in the United States, including a Jewish community center in Chicago.

Why would Iranian agents surveil a Jewish community center if not for malicious purposes?

Former U.S. officials should reflect deeply on this question before promoting their pet diplomatic projects with Iran on TV and radio networks across our country.

The tragic events in Pittsburgh last month remind us all of our shared responsibility to confront anti-Semitism and hatred, wherever and whenever it surfaces, including when it is propagated by state actors with nefarious intentions.

Under this administration, we will make certain Iran understands the consequences of targeting American and Israeli citizens.

As I said at the United Nations in September, if the Iranian regime continues to lie, cheat, and deceive; if it threatens the United States and our allies; if it harms our citizens, there will indeed be HELL to PAY.

In case there is any doubt, I meant what I said.

Just last month, the President decided to terminate the 1955 Treaty of Amity with Iran. The regime cannot practice animosity in its conduct and then ask for amity under international law.

Last month, we also withdrew from the Optional Protocol on Dispute Resolution to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, which purported to permit the so-called State of Palestine’s lawsuit against the United States at the International Court of Justice.

We will not allow anyone to promote baseless, politicized claims against the United States and Israel.

In August, we also began reimposing hard-hitting nuclear sanctions that had been lifted under the Iran Nuclear Deal. All nuclear-related sanctions will be back in full force tomorrow, thus completing the termination of U.S. participation in the Iran Nuclear Deal.

Measures coming back into force tomorrow include powerful sanctions on Iran’s energy, shipping, and shipbuilding sectors, and sanctions targeting transactions with the Central Bank of Iran and sanctioned Iranian banks. And we will not stop here—President Trump has called for maximum pressure on Iran, and his administration will deliver. I am confident.

Collectively, under this administration, we have levied the toughest-ever sanctions against Iran in history, and they are already having a devastating effect on the Iranian economy.

The Iranian rial has lost about seventy percent of its value; the Iranian inflation rate has nearly quadrupled since May, and Iran’s economy is sliding into recession.

More than 100 companies have decided to cease doing business with Iran, and that number is growing daily.

As a result of the administration’s tough stance on curtailing the regime’s oil exports, Iranian oil exports have also fallen dramatically. Since May, over 20 countries have reduced their imports of Iranian oil to zero and Iran’s oil exports have fallen by over a million barrels per day.

Moving forward, President Trump intends to pursue additional, tougher measures, to apply maximum pressure on the regime and force it to choose between changing its behavior and economic disaster.

We will also strictly enforce all previously existing sanctions—much tighter than under the Obama administration.

This is a maximum pressure campaign. We are targeting the regime’s funding, leadership, proxies, militias, and enablers. Any individual or entity that fails to comply with U.S. sanctions will risk severe consequences.

All nations and businesses should follow the lead of companies like Siemens, Maersk, Hyundai, Boeing, Total, Allianz, Daimler, Mazda, and Reliance Oil, among others, which have all decided to stop doing business with Iran.

European nations who witnessed the horrors of the Holocaust firsthand should appreciate the need to cut business ties with a regime that spreads anti-Semitic propaganda, promotes terrorism against the Jewish people, and calls for the destruction of the Jewish state.

The citizens of the United States and Israel share a profound faith in God and a pervasive and ever-present awareness of our history.

We understand the sacrifices of those who came before us, to build our nations, to carve out a home for freedom and liberty, to defend our security, and safeguard our future.

Critically, the American and Israeli people also recognize what is required of us to preserve our nations today. Together, there is no threat that the United States and Israel cannot face down, no challenge we cannot overcome, and no limit to our common potential.

President Trump has opened a new and exciting chapter in U.S.-Israeli relations.

We are standing united on the international stage.

We are condemning and defunding anti-Semitic and anti-Israel organizations.

We are striving toward a future of peace for all in the Middle East.

And, we are doing what is right by our people and the world.

The United States will continue to work closely with our Israeli counterparts in the days and months ahead to further deepen the unbreakable alliance between our nations.

We will be depending on organizations like ZOA to advance these vital efforts. Thank you very much.