

# ROUNDS

## FOR SENATE

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US-Israel Relations

*Like us, Israel has had to fight for its independence. The United States must stand united with our ally in the Middle East - the nation of Israel.*  
– Mike Rounds

I worked eight years as the governor of the great state of South Dakota, first elected in November 2002. After September 11, 2001, my tenure was marked by the war on terrorism. I was a war-time governor and commander-in-chief of the South Dakota National Guard. We deployed thousands of our troops during this time, some came home with scars that never healed, others lost their lives in service to our country.

My wife, Jean, and I recently returned from a vacation in Israel. We were accompanied by our friends, Senator Stan and Lynda Adelstein. We have long desired to better understand the geopolitical issues that are relevant today, and as a Christian, I needed to see the Holy Land for myself. Israel is not just a place. It is a Holy Land where the Holiest of men walked and our allies remain. It must be defended, secured and supported.

That trip, and the experiences we had, reaffirmed my belief that the United States must provide aid and uncompromising support to Israel. We must also reinforce the strength of our relationship. Israel is geographically surrounded by hostile nations and constant threats. Unwavering support for Israel must be a strategic national priority for our country.

If my fellow South Dakotans believe in me enough to send me to the United States Senate to represent them, I will stand on these personal accounts and principles and work to secure a strengthened relationship with Israel.

### **Israel**

The United States was founded upon the principles of religious freedom, civil liberties, and democratic government. The State of Israel was founded upon the same fundamental beliefs and values on May 14, 1948. This was the same day their neighbors launched an unprovoked war with the declared intention to drive every one of Israel's men, women and children "into the sea."

Like our country, Israel has had to fight for its independence. Unlike our country or any other democratic country, Israel has been forced to maintain and live by its democratic ideals in the face of an unyielding threat to its very existence by sworn enemies. That threat has never dissipated or withered despite countless Israeli entreaties for peace.

Israel has suffered harsh wars, unceasing propaganda, and perpetual terror from a region in which the concepts of civil liberties and democracy are as forbidden as they are taken for granted in our country. Yet tiny Israel has managed to sustain an elected Parliament, in which all viewpoints and minorities are represented and all voices are given a platform; a Judiciary which, even in war, holds the Israeli government and Defense Forces accountable to the highest moral principles; and an elected Cabinet and Prime Minister, who are accountable solely to its citizens.

Israel is not only a democratic ally, it is also America's most reliable ally. Israel has voted with the United States at the United Nations more often than any other country – more often than our allies in NATO and most certainly more often than all other countries in the Middle East with whom we maintain friendly relations.

The U.S. must be a consistent advocate for - and trusted ally of - Israel.

### **Foreign Aid to Israel**

Foreign aid, which comes in many shapes and forms, is an essential component of America's deeply rooted commitment to the security and stability of our allies. Since World War II, the U.S. has maintained an immense network of military bases throughout Europe and in Japan. And during this time, Americans have fought and died on behalf of South Korea, in defense of South Vietnam, to protect Kuwait, to guard Saudi Arabia, to shield Bosnians, and to liberate Iraq – sacrificing more than 100,000 American lives and costing trillions of today's dollars. I am named for my uncle Marion M. Rounds who was killed in WWII. I understand the personal sacrifices families face in the defense of freedom.

Our alliance with Israel, however, has not borne such a high cost. Despite the overwhelming number of Israel's enemies and the crushing burden of her defense needs, America has never fought a war to protect Israel and Israel has never asked us to do so. Israel's famed intelligence services share vital intelligence with our country, and Israel's vaunted Defense Forces and high tech industry help us develop the most advanced weapons systems, which is the bulwark of our country's security. I plan to support the 2007 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in entirety between the US and Israel which reconfirms the U.S. commitment to the security of Israel and provides defense aid to Israel.

### **Jerusalem**

Jerusalem is the capital of Israel, a recognized ally, and a sovereign nation. Israel stands alone in the Middle East in enforcing laws pursuant to the practice of religious freedom, and extends those freedoms to all people living in its capital. The administration should comply with the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995 and move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem.

### **The War on Terrorism**

There is no middle ground in the war on terrorism. Terrorism requires government support in order to exist on the scale we are currently witnessing. Currently, Syria is in a state of civil war. The instability in Syria has created a structure in which Hezbollah, at the direction of its Iranian handlers, have entered this civil war in alliance with Syrian government forces. Considering Syria's alliance with Iran, the situation is extremely volatile.

## **Iran**

Countries like Iran must be barred from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. There is no doubt that fanatical leadership, which denies the Holocaust, will use these weapons against Israel and other countries.

Iran represents the greatest danger to world peace as it continues to pursue its nuclear weapons ambitions. Diplomacy has not, thus far, halted or deterred them. I will support legislation to enforce economic and other sanctions against Iran. I will also support any and all necessary action to prevent Iran from developing and acquiring weapons of mass destruction. The people of Iran and the rest of the world must understand that the U.S. will not tolerate a nuclear-armed Iran.

## **The Middle East Peace Process**

It is clear that Israel has taken extreme risks in its efforts to find an accommodation with its neighbors and to achieve a just and lasting peace in the region.

While Israel agreed to the two state partition of Palestine in 1948, it was the Arabs who rejected it and then took control of Gaza and the West Bank from the Palestinians. They refused the creation of a Palestinian state and remained committed to the destruction of Israel. Israel later evacuated its own citizens from Gaza and left for the Palestinians an area with industry, agriculture, a coast on the Mediterranean with significant gas reserves, and a border with Egypt. The result was warfare. Instead of promoting the good of its people, Hamas has staged a perpetual state of war with Israel. Unfortunately, Gaza has been used as a base for terrorist attacks on peaceful settlements in Israel. I visited Sdrot, and saw first hand the imprint of perpetual warfare on the daily lives of these citizens.

Israel has a clear legal basis, one that has been recognized by United Nations Resolution 242, to retain the parts of the West Bank that it needs for its security and its citizens. United Nations Resolution 242 leaves the status of the territories for negotiations between the parties, with each country in the area being entitled to "secure and recognized borders." This may require the relocation of both Jewish and Arab settlements.

Based on my experience as commander in chief of the South Dakota National Guard, multiple trips to the Middle East and most recently, my experience in Israel – I believe that a peaceful two state solution between [Israel and Palestine] is possible. However, negotiations will require face-to-face interaction and mutual respect. Palestine must understand that peace cannot be found without their purging of any and all terrorist activity, while Israel pursues secure and defensible borders.

The U. S. should stand with its ally Israel as it seeks to create secure borders and fight terrorism within them. The U.S. should assist in this process by supporting Israel and working in concert with both sides, but not independently. The U.S. is not in a position to pre-set timetables nor unreasonably require that Israel deal with countries that do not recognize their conditions or have pledged the destruction of Israel or its people.

## **Anti-Semitism**

World history is filled with atrocities of racial and religious hatred. The Holocaust brought humanity to a level of genocide and racism never before witnessed in written history. Unfortunately, there is a resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe and the promulgation of racial hatred in many Middle East countries, much like the early days of the Nazi movement. I pledge to fight against all forms of racial and religious intolerance, whether it is in the streets of Europe, the desert of the Arabian Peninsula, or our own backyard.

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P.O. BOX 250 – PIERRE, SD 57501