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757868

**THE WHITE HOUSE
DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT AND TRACKING
WORKSHEET**



DATE RECEIVED: 6/30/2008

CASE ID: 757868

NAME OF CORRESPONDENT: THE HONORABLE BARACK OBAMA

F0008

SUBJECT: WRITES TO REITERATE SOME OF THE CONCERNS AND PRIORITIES HE RASIED IN HIS MIDDLE EAST SPEECH

ROUTE TO: AGENCY/OFFICE	(STAFF NAME)	ACTION		DISPOSITION	
		CODE	DATE	TYPE RESPONSE	CODE
LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS	DAN MEYER	ORG	7/2/2008		
ACTION COMMENTS:					
✓ DEPARTMENT OF STATE		A	7/2/2008	A	7/23/08
ACTION COMMENTS:					
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL	STEVE HADLEY	I	7/2/2008	C	
ACTION COMMENTS:					
ACTION COMMENTS:					
ACTION COMMENTS:					

COMMENTS:

MEDIA: FAX

USER CODE:

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BY
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ACTION CODES:	DISPOSITION		
A - APPROPRIATE ACTION B - RESEARCH AND REPORT BACK D - DRAFT RESPONSE I - INFO COPY/NO ACT NECESSARY R - DIRECT REPLY W/ COPY	TYPE RESPONSE: TYPE RESPONSE = INITIALS OF SIGNER NRN = NO RESPONSE NEEDED	DISPOSITION CODES: A - ANSWERED/ACKNOWLEDGED C - CLOSED X - INTERIM REPLY	COMPLETED DATE: COMPLETED = DATE OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OR CLOSE-OUT DATE (MM/DD/YY)

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**THE WHITE HOUSE OFFICE
REFERRAL**

July 02, 2008

TO: DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ACTION REQUESTED: APPROPRIATE ACTION

DESCRIPTION OF INCOMING:

ID: 757868

MEDIA: FAX

DOCUMENT DATE: JULY 24, 2008

TO: PRESIDENT BUSH

FROM: BARACK OBAMA
UNITED STATES SENATE
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

SUBJECT: WRITES TO REITERATE SOME OF THE CONCERNS AND PRIORITIES
HE RASIED IN HIS MIDDLE EAST SPEECH

COMMENTS:

PROMPT ACTION IS ESSENTIAL -- IF REQUIRED ACTION HAS NOT BEEN TAKEN WITHIN 9
WORKING DAYS OF RECEIPT, UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED, PLEASE TELEPHONE THE
UNDERSIGNED AT 456-2590.

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TO: DOCUMENT TRACKING UNIT, ROOM 84, OFFICE OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT - THE WHITE
HOUSE, 20500

BARACK OBAMA
ILLINOIS

SENATE

757868 P.01/02
NO. 000

COMMITTEES:

HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR AND PENSIONS

HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

FOREIGN RELATIONS

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 24, 2008

From: WM
To: Senate
LA CIV.

RECEIVED
JUN 10 P 2:35

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I recently outlined my views on the Middle East in a major speech, and I am writing to reiterate some of the concerns and priorities I raised in that speech.

A fundamental principle of America's Middle East policy must be our unshakeable commitment to Israel's security. I believe that is a bipartisan commitment, and I will work to continue and advance that consensus. But I am deeply concerned that Israel's security has been put at greater risk, both because of renewed threats from implacable enemies like Iran, Hizbollah, and Hamas, and because of policy choices by the United States.

One essential step for ensuring Israel's security in the long term would be achieving a lasting peace with its neighbors. In the case of the Palestinians, that means a negotiated agreement to provide for two states living side-by-side in peace and security, so that both sides can achieve their legitimate aspirations. Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas committed themselves to achieving this goal in the process that began at Annapolis, but they will need a sustained, concerted effort by the United States to help them succeed. In your remaining time in office, I hope you will devote the necessary resources to supporting Israel and Palestinian leaders who are committed to this effort to the maximum possible extent.

These peace efforts take place in a difficult environment. Hamas, which opposes negotiations and is committed to Israel's destruction, continues to rule in Gaza. Under their rule, thousands of rockets have been fired at civilian populations in Sderot and surrounding communities in southern Israel, causing over a dozen deaths, many injuries, and the disruption of normal life for all who live in this area. Hamas, which is receiving funding, training, and weaponry from Iran, is acquiring longer-range missile capabilities, which enable it to strike even larger population centers, such as Ashkelon. Although a truce went into effect last week - and we all hope it will bring calm to the people of southern Israel, improve life for Palestinians in Gaza, and lead to the release of Gilad Shalit - the threat posed by Hamas rule has not passed, and will not pass so long as Hamas remains committed to Israel's destruction.

In the face of this threat, several firm positions are called for by the United States. First, we must reiterate that Israel has the right to defend itself from such attacks,

and that the United States will stand up for that right in the United Nations and elsewhere. Second, we must press Egypt to devote more resources and effort to stopping the smuggling of weapons into Gaza from the Sinai, where much of Hamas' weaponry arrives from. This will help ensure that Hamas does not use the truce to rearm and regroup. Third, we must continue to isolate Hamas, and ensure that others do so, until and unless they recognize Israel, renounce violence, and abide by past agreements.

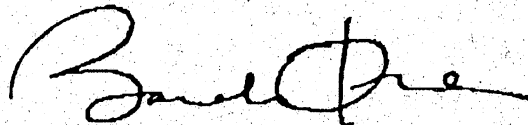
It is also imperative that other Arab governments step forward to give greater support to the Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts. This support can take two main forms. First, these governments should deliver on their commitments to provide large-scale financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority, enabling it to improve economic conditions for Palestinians on the ground. Saudi Arabia and the other oil-producing states of the Gulf, in particular, have the resources to make a profound investment in Israeli-Palestinian peace by helping to improve the lives of the Palestinian people, and we must urge them to do just that. The Arab states proclaim their great concern for the Palestinian people and now with unprecedented oil revenues flowing into their coffers, there is no reason not to call on them publicly to provide far more assistance to the Palestinian Authority. They can also provide important political and diplomatic support to President Abbas as he tries to reach a negotiated settlement.

Second, the Arab states should support the Palestinians and prepare their own people for peace by making gestures of normalization toward Israel. The entire regional atmosphere would improve, and peacemakers on all sides would see their efforts enhanced, if Arab governments would reach out to Israelis with a sincere indication of their readiness to accept Israel as a legitimate nation in the Middle East.

Finally, the recent announcement that Israel and Syria have resumed their own peace negotiations is encouraging news, and it should spur the United States to support the parties' efforts to achieve their goal of a negotiated settlement. Turkey deserves praise for its role in arranging these talks, and the success of these negotiations could, among other things, be a setback for Iran's influence and Hizbollah's ability to acquire advanced weaponry.

I close by urging you to redouble your efforts to help Israelis and Palestinians achieve success in their peace efforts; to stand up for Israel's right of self-defense; to press the Arab states to do more to advance the peace process; and to support the Israeli-Syrian talks. All of these steps will advance the interests of the United States and the security of our ally, Israel.

Sincerely,



Barack Obama
United States Senator

757868

United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520



JUL 23 2008

Dear Senator Obama:

Thank you for your June 24 letter to President Bush expressing concerns and suggestions on the Middle East, and more specifically Israel's security. We have been asked to respond on the President's behalf.

We share your concerns that Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas pose a very significant threat to the security of Israel. We also share your aspirations for a negotiated peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians leading to two states living side-by-side in peace and security. President Bush and Secretary Rice are working diligently to help the parties reach such an agreement by the end of the year. We are also working with and monitoring the actions of both parties to ensure that they uphold their obligations as laid out in the Roadmap and reiterated at the Annapolis Peace Conference last November.

We acknowledge Israel's right to defend itself and frequently come to its aid when this right is challenged -- be it in the United Nations or elsewhere. Our stance against terrorism is unwavering and we support Israel's right to defend itself against this threat, as well as bellicose states who seek to disrupt stability in the region.

Currently, we are working closely with the Egyptian Government to improve security along the border with Gaza. In mid-2008 Egypt will receive \$23 million in U.S. FMF-funded training and equipment to help detect and destroy tunnels along the Gaza border. Since October 2005, when the Israeli Defense Forces withdrew from Gaza, Egyptian security forces have discovered more than 200 tunnels used for smuggling weapons and other contraband into Gaza. They deployed civilian security personnel to guard the border and interdict smuggling and have nearly completed a concrete border wall. We will continue to work with the Egyptian Government to secure the Gaza border.

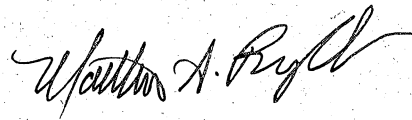
The Honorable
Barack Obama,
United States Senate.

We are continually encouraging Arab governments to support the Palestinians financially. Through the Paris Donors' Conference, Bethlehem Conference, and most recently, the Berlin Conference, we have participated in and organized efforts to raise funds for security, humanitarian, and infrastructure projects in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. We also continue to encourage Arab countries to take public steps to normalize their relationships with Israel.

We are encouraged by the discussions between Syria and Lebanon at the Mediterranean Union Summit in Paris, and respect President Sarkozy's efforts to facilitate dialogue between the two parties. We also understand the importance of peace between Israel and Syria, and between Israel and Lebanon in order to create lasting peace for the region.

We hope this information is helpful to you. Please feel free to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew A. Reynolds". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Matthew" being the most prominent part.

Matthew A. Reynolds
Acting Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs