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Joint Statement of the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Israel

October 31, 1998

On October 31, 1998, President Clinton and Prime Minister Netanyahu concluded a Memorandum of Agreement on the potential threat to Israel posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction in the region. This subject has been of great concern to both governments for some time, and the Memorandum of Agreement establishes a new mechanism for enhancing their cooperation in dealing with this potential threat. Pursuant to the Memorandum of Agreement, a joint strategic planning committee will be established to formulate recommendations on upgrading the framework of U.S.-Israeli strategic and military relationships, as well as technological cooperation.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Interview With Shlomo Raz and Jacob Eilon of Israeli Television Channel 2

October 31, 1998

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin

Q. President Clinton, first of all, thank you very much for sitting down with us.

The President. Delighted to do it. Thank you.

Q. You know, it's exactly 3 years since the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. And Mrs. Rabin said she was rather disappointed that you failed to mention her husband during the East Room ceremony last Friday. How do you respond to that?

The President. Well, you know, the agreement is actually supposed to enter into force on the third anniversary of his passing, of his killing. And I think that if, in fact, it does do so, it is a fitting thing, because none of us would be here if it hadn't been for him. He really started all this in a profound way.

I know that the Madrid conference started before his election, but it was his conviction and his strength and security that he conveyed to the people of Israel, I think, that made this whole peace process possible. And I never do anything in the process that I don't think about him.

Danger to Prime Minister Netanyahu

Q. Mr. President, from the tragic assassination to the current situation, Prime Minister Netanyahu might put himself at the same risk as Mr. Rabin. So perhaps it is unjustified to put pressure on him to follow the Oslo accord or the Oslo track.

The President. Well, I don't think there's any question that the Prime Minister has put himself at some physical risk in pursuing the peace process. But I believe that it's important that the people of Israel know that, at least in my opinion, it's a good agreement, that it strengthens Israel's security needs, that the agreements made with the Palestinians are fully consistent with Oslo. And the Prime Minister worked very, very hard to advance Israel's security interests.

Just for example, there was the whole issue of what should be done with the people whom Israel believes have committed acts of violence and terrorism against Israelis. And I am convinced that the Palestinians will now act against these people in a way that is consistent with the agreement and that will meet the Prime Minister's and Israel's needs. So that's an example of a whole array of security advances that were embedded in this agreement. And I think all Israelis who support the peace process should support the agreement because I think it furthers the cause of peace.

Palestinian National Council

Q. Mr. President, is it really the PNC, the Palestinian National Council, that is going to convene to revise the Palestinian covenant with your presence? Is it really the PNC?

The President. Well, it's the PNC plus a number of other groups. And some of these groups are embedded within the PNC; that is, they're dual membership for some of the people—in the Government, in the executive council, in the other councils involved. And some are outside the PNC.