

We stand with Israel.
I yield the floor.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

ISRAEL

Mr. TILLIS. Madam President, I come here to join my colleagues to talk about the events of the past 10 or so days in Israel and the horrible attacks.

I want to talk a little bit about two visits that I have made there over the past year or so, the most recent one back in February. But I want to start with holding our Members accountable here on Capitol Hill.

This was posted on social media, and it reads like false statements that we have seen from Hamas and other groups that want to foment hate and death in the region. It reads like this: Israel just bombed the Baptist Hospital building, killing 500 Palestinians—doctors, children, patients—just like that.

That was within an hour or two of the bombing. Before we knew anything, before any of us could have possibly had a secured briefing, before we had gotten an assessment from the President of the United States or any of our intelligence sources here, before we could go down to the SCIF and actually understand the details, that statement was made.

You would think that would come from a member of Hamas, but it came from a Member of our Congress. If that Member of Congress wants to take responsibility for the protest that we now see in Beirut—good on you, in Jordan, in Amman, and in Egypt. This sort of leadership or failure of leadership has no place on Capitol Hill.

Now I want to talk about why I think Hamas is evil and why Iran is a part of this and why this is not surprising that the very details of this attack took place.

Earlier this year, in February, I was in—well, let me back up. A couple of years ago, I was in Israel, and we went down to the Gaza Strip. We saw a tunnel head. We actually walked into a tunnel that was discovered by the Israelis. We went to a Patriot battery or an armed dome battery that every day is prepared to shoot down missiles because that always happens. Before this attack, it happened almost on a daily basis. I have literally been in Israel when I am having lunch, in northern Israel—this was near the Golan Heights—and I am asking somebody to pass a plate of food, and a bomb goes off. And the people living in this kibbutz did not even miss a beat. Every day they have to live with this stuff.

So now, down in Gaza, we see the tunnel system that is in Gaza. If you go north to the Lebanese border, you will see an entire network of tunnels that the Israelis identified just in time. It had been a project, it was estimated to be, 10 years in the making, funded by Iran. Hezbollah is in Lebanon. Hamas

is down in the Gaza Strip. They had developed these tunnel networks, and they were prepared to do the same thing in northern Israel that we saw in southern Israel over the past week and a half. They even want to design this to strike fear and terror in the Israeli people. They want them to think—they want their children to think that they are going to pop out of the ground and kidnap them and kill their parents. This is a part of the terror that they want the Israeli people to live with every single day.

The Iranians were absolutely responsible for funding Hamas to build that tunnel network in northern Israel, and they do the same thing with Hamas in southern Israel.

Ladies and gentlemen, first off, this has to end. Let us work with facts. If Israel doesn't abide by the rules of war, then we should hold them accountable. But what we are finding out now from additional intelligence sources is that it does appear as though this was not an Israeli strike; that it was probably a failed missile launch from Hamas.

Well, let the facts lead where they may, but here is what I do know: This congressional Member and others, before they can actually stand up to the Palestinian people—who I believe the majority of whom are good people who want to live free and live in democracy—they have to recognize that Hamas is evil, every single one of them. From their leadership down to their rank and files to the ones who flew the ultralights in to the people who came out of the tunnels and murdered over 1,200 people, they have to be held accountable. Their funder has to be held accountable. Their strategists in Iran have to be held accountable.

We in the United States have to stand by Israel and by freedom-loving Palestinians and freedom-loving members of the Middle East, but we cannot let this go. We cannot let this evil go unchecked.

We have to stand by Israel, and we have to make sure that we do everything we can to educate the American people on the facts and disabuse them of any notion that this congressional Member or anyone else has any place in communicating that misinformation to the American people and across the world. And the violence that can come from making people believe that, they have to own.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

ISRAEL

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President:

Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts . . . Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror . . . These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our Nation into chaos and retreat.

These were the words of former President George W. Bush speaking to the Nation on the evening of Sep-

tember 11, 2001. But they could have been repeated word for word by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the wake of the heinous terrorist attacks by Hamas that left more than 1,400 dead in Israel on October 7.

As Americans, we know the horror of living through the mass murder of our fellow citizens in a shocking terrorist attack; to be overcome with these intertwined feelings of insecurity and fear, fury, and grief; to be filled with the deep righteous desire for justice and retribution a need to reconcile the moral universe by making the perpetrators of these crimes pay a heavy price. And we know that, even as the impulse to avenge may subside, there remains a need to deter, to show your enemies that aggression against us will be met with overwhelming force.

Nine days after September 11, President Bush presented an ultimatum to Afghanistan's Taliban government:

[H]and over the terrorists, or . . . share in their fate.

The United States moved swiftly to mobilize the support of the international community and the overwhelming capabilities of the U.S. military to destroy al-Qaida and wrest control of Afghanistan from their Taliban hosts. It was a just mission. Neither America's security nor the moral order of the world could have been preserved if the Taliban remained in power, having made possible al-Qaida's training and planning to execute the September 11 attack. Americans rallied around the invasion of Afghanistan—so did the world.

In thinking back on those early days in the fall of 2001, America was looking for partners, not second-guessers or critics. We would not have taken kindly to lectures about how we should go about meting out justice or keeping our Nation safe. Either you were with us or you were against us. With 3,000 Americans dead, that was our mindset, and it was an entirely understandable one.

Israel must seek justice for the 1,400 of its citizens murdered by Hamas on October 7. Israel must bring to justice those who planned and executed the attacks, and it must seek to destroy Hamas as an armed group or, at the very least, destroy its capability to carry out terrorist violence against Israelis. Israel must defend itself, just like we had to do in 2001. This is the state's obligation to its people.

And I, for one, will be there to support Israel, just like our friends were there for us 20 years ago. And I, for one, am glad to see this body, the U.S. Senate, coming together—Republicans and Democrats, who fight over a lot of things—in our joint show of support for Israel's defense.

But here is what I also believe. I believe that part of the way that we support Israel is providing them with funding and with arms in order to destroy Hamas's military capabilities, but I also believe that we should be sharing the lessons that we learned

from our response to September 11 and the successive two decades of wars waged in the name of counterterrorism.

If we are going to be honest with our friends in Israel, then we need to admit that we often failed to see beyond our fury and that we made mistakes by not understanding what came next after the invasion of Afghanistan and the decapitation of our enemy. We had a day-one strategy, but we did not have a day-two strategy, and we paid a horrible price.

After al-Qaida fled and the Taliban government collapsed, we spent 20 years trying to “win” without a clear idea of what “winning” was, how it would be accomplished, or how that was actually linked to making America safer.

Now, let me be clear. The challenge Israel faces from Hamas is different in really important ways from the al-Qaida threat to the United States, and the lessons of America’s global counterterrorism campaign do not neatly map onto Israel’s current crisis. For one, the physical proximity of the threat is meaningful. Hamas does not operate from a safe distance. It exists right next door, in Gaza.

America had no experience in or with Afghanistan before the invasion—not so for Israel and Gaza. They know each other. They have an intimate history, and that history impacts the effectiveness of the fight to come.

Another key distinction is the disposition of the enemy. Hamas is not hiding in caves in the Tora Bora. They are both a military and a political entity. They live in a tightly packed corridor that is home to more than 2 million people. Many of them have nothing to do with Hamas.

So there is no perfect comparison between Afghanistan and Gaza, but there are enough similarities that we should be confident in sharing with our friends in Israel the lessons that we learned, the mistakes we made—mistakes that Israel could avoid.

The first of those mistakes was lacking a realistic conception of success. In Afghanistan, we set about the total and complete elimination of “ungoverned space” and “terrorist safe havens”; but after 20 years of fighting, of raids, of targeted strikes, we finally came to terms with a really harsh reality: Our tactics were often producing more terrorists and insurgents than they were eliminating. We were far too cavalier about civilian casualties and the humanitarian cost of our pursuit of the Taliban, and it ended up simply making the Taliban stronger.

Today, Israeli leaders talk about totally eliminating every last Hamas fighter. It is an understandable objective, given the terror that Hamas rained down on Israel. But is it realistic? Can the Israeli military destroy an entire movement—not just a terrorist organization or an armed group but a political entity that administers territory? Is there a risk of our fate in

Afghanistan—creating more terrorists than we eliminated—repeating in Gaza?

Another mistake we made in Afghanistan was believing that every proposal we put down on paper could, through the sheer force of American will, become a reality on the ground. We drew up a viable plan to replace the Taliban’s kleptocratic theocracy with corruption-free parliamentary democracy. But Afghanistan was not a fit for that plan, and our plan, which looked good on a PowerPoint, was destined to fail.

What was an achievable outcome that we eventually, 20 years later, settled on was eliminating al-Qaida’s ability to attack the United States and creating the political conditions on the ground in Afghanistan so that al-Qaida would never again be granted safe harbor. But, of course, that outcome didn’t need to take 20 years. It was likely available to the United States much earlier in the conflict.

If Israel does mount a ground invasion, the question is, of course: What comes next?

Hamas administers Gaza. So if Hamas is eliminated, who takes their place? Does Israel reoccupy Gaza in the long run and run Gaza directly? That would seem like a recipe for perpetual conflict. Or does Israel imagine that the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority could step up and administer Gaza? I won’t go into a full analysis, but there are very few Middle East watchers who bet that that is a long-term, viable arrangement.

Some Israeli leaders suggest that the question of the future status of Gaza is a matter to be addressed after Israel has “won the war.” But what we learned in Afghanistan is that the very concept of “winning” is meaningless if it is not built around the conditions of a sustainable peace.

And what is the realistic possibility of building a post-Hamas governing structure in Gaza, particularly when the only immediate alternative would seem to be a renewed and indefinite occupation?

If there isn’t a satisfactory answer to these questions, then the military planning is incomplete.

But, make no mistake, America is going to support Israel in its time of need, with funding, with weapons, with whatever they need.

But I raise these questions only because there are important lessons that can be drawn—not perfect parallels but important lessons that can be drawn—from both our successes and our failures.

We had to invade Afghanistan. We had to take out the Taliban. It was the only way to square the moral universe. Israel must strike at Hamas. Israel must destroy their military capabilities. It is the only way to restore the balance of the moral universe. But supporting Israel also means helping them learn from our successes and our failures and to not reflexively repeat the

same mistakes we made 20 years ago. Friends support friends, but friends also level with friends.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

ISRAEL

Mr. YOUNG. Madam President, throughout their history, the children of Israel have known persecution and sorrow. They have lived in exile and enslavement. They have faced bigotry and violence. Entire nations and civilizations have sought to extinguish them and vanished, but the Jewish people remain, and, against all odds, millions of their descendants gathered together in the Holy Land and founded a nation.

Today, Israel is a vibrant democracy in the Middle East and a strong ally of the United States of America. Many people of faith would say the existence and perseverance of the State of Israel is itself evidence of divine providence.

Yet, even today—even today—Israel faces existential threats. On October 7, Hamas terrorists carried out the worst attack on the Jewish people since the Holocaust: the slaughter of 1,400 people; the decapitation of babies; the execution of grandmothers; and the taking of nearly 200 hostages, including children, women, seniors, and American citizens. Thirty Americans were among the murdered—30 Americans. Many of our fellow citizens have friends and family in Israel.

Regardless of our faith, we are all, I know, heartbroken for the loss and sickened—sickened—by the cruelty. And, on behalf of the Hoosiers I represent, I want to express my deepest condolences to the people of Israel as they mourn and pray and bury the dead.

As it has since its founding, against alliances of far larger nations and armies, this country, which is four times smaller than Indiana, will defend itself, and America will be here for Israel and support its right to confront this violence, this barbarism. We will do this because our values are the same: dedication to liberty and order, to tolerance, and to human dignity.

Make no mistake, the days ahead will be difficult. As Members of this body know too well, Israel is still under threat, and the risk of additional fronts opening up is real.

Over the past several days, I have been heartened by the strong bipartisan support in the U.S. Senate for the people of Israel. During this time of peril, this body cannot succumb to isolationism. We cannot abandon Israel any more than we can abandon our friends in Ukraine or Taiwan. On urgent matters of national security, we are stronger when we stand together, and in the difficult days ahead, we will work to support the people of Israel. I know we will continue that spirit.

Relatedly, I call on the Biden administration to consult and closely work with this Congress to quickly fulfill—