



I had the opportunity recently to join with other House conservatives in meeting with Michael Oren, the Israeli Ambassador to the United States. Ambassador Oren is a historian who has a tremendous understanding of the challenges in the Middle East. He provided a comprehensive discussion of the Middle East Peace Process and the many challenges threatening the security of both Israel and the United States. These threats include Iran's nuclear program and the rearming of the terrorist group Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Ambassador Oren stressed that the Israeli government is fully committed to ongoing negotiations to bring about a two-state solution where the Jewish and Palestinian peoples live side-by-side in peace and security. With that said, he pointed out that the terrorist group Hamas remains in control of the Gaza Strip (which would be a part of a Palestinian state) and continues to pose a serious threat to the security of Israel and is a major roadblock to any lasting agreement. Further, the Ambassador made it clear that Iran is moving forward with its nuclear program and reminded us of public intelligence assessments that Iran will likely develop a nuclear capability next year. He characterized this outcome as a completely unacceptable threat to Israel's security. He also noted that Hezbollah, the terrorist group headquartered in Lebanon and supported by Iran that instigated a war with Israel in 2006, now has four times the number of missiles that it did during that conflict—missiles that are extremely accurate and can reach every Israeli city.

Ambassador Oren stressed the importance of the U.S.-Israel friendship as his nation confronts these and other challenges. I could not agree more strongly. It is essential that the United States stands with Israel when it is forced to respond to grave threats to its security, and maintains strong military and economic ties with Israel. While I do not oppose U.S. efforts to bring Israeli and Palestinian leaders together for talks, I am not particularly optimistic that the negotiations will result in an enduring peace agreement considering Hamas' refusal to even recognize Israel's right to exist. I also believe it is critical that President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton avoid any further [public rebukes and bullying](#) of Israel and boldly demand that Palestinian leaders address the Hamas challenge and other barriers to peace. Further, I believe our nation should keep all options on the table to prevent Iran from building a nuclear weapon.

A nuclear Iran would threaten the very existence of Israel and U.S. troops serving in the region, and would spark a dangerous arms race in the world's most volatile region. It is essential that we strengthen both our resolve along with our support for Israel in the face of this threat.