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Hamas Aggression from Gaza: Israel Deserves Robust and Vigorous Support

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. I thank my good friend from Utah. I thank him for his service to our country and for, again, bringing us all together this evening.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call on the President of the United States to give Israel the robust and vigorous support it deserves.

Since the latest round of unprovoked rocket barrages were launched on July 6 by Hamas, Israeli citizens have lived under a relentless rocket attack, mortar fire, even attack from Hamas drone aircraft and a foiled sea raid.

Israel itself has lived under a media attack, a calculated campaign to isolate Israel for defending itself. Major articles in international newspapers around the world take a grossly anti- Israeli slant.

Make no mistake about it, Mr. Speaker. A major purpose of Hamas' rocket attacks is to provoke counter-attacks, thereby to use the inevitable civilian deaths to set up an international media campaign against Israel. Hamas is guilty of sacrificing Palestinian lives and is guilty of using women and

children as human shields in a brutally cynical attempt to manipulate world public opinion and isolate Israel.

Mr. Speaker, the facts on the ground of Hamas attacks were clear from the start and follow long-established patterns. It is time our government sent a much more powerful and unambiguous message that the U.S. fully supports Israel's right to defend itself.

The administration should emphasize that Israel's actions in its own defense are legal, that they are right, and that the U.S. stands with Israel without any ifs, ands, or buts, or so longs or any other qualifiers.

As of yesterday, since the start of Israel's Operation Protective Edge, 2,500 rockets have been fired at Israel from Gaza. 1,875 of these have landed in Israel; 495 have been shot down by Iron Dome. Also, as of yesterday, the IDF has uncovered in Gaza 32 tunnels, with more than 60 access shafts, some of which were in mosques and houses.

Anyone who has read today's feature in The New York Times, "Tunnels Lead Right

to the Heart of Israeli Fear,’’ understand what these tunnels mean. The tunnels are about 50 feet underground, mostly undetectable like this one to my left, and underground equipment cannot even discover their whereabouts.

The story quotes Eyal Brandeis, who lives in Kibbutz Sufa, and he says:

It is a very pastoral environment. I live in the quiet of the green grass, the trees. It is not pleasant, though, that you sit one day on the patio drinking coffee with your wife and a bunch of terrorists will rise from the ground.

That is exactly what happened a mile from his kibbutz at dawn on July 17.

Many Israelis are more concerned about the tunnels than the rockets. Perhaps that gives us some insight into the dimension of the Hamas terrorist.

I note, Mr. Speaker, that despite these rocket attacks by Hamas and tunnels, Israel continues to permit the transfer to the Gaza of humanitarian supplies and goods. Israel’s humanity while under terrorist fire, its continued effort to do everything it can to separate terrorist militants from Palestinian civilians, only underscores the evil nature of Hamas.

Mr. Speaker, Hamas was designated a foreign terrorist organization in 1997, and it has adopted its charter, the famous Covenant of the Islamic Resistance. That charter remains its ideological program.

Only yesterday, Khaled Meshaal, the leader of Hamas, spoke on the Charlie Rose show in response to a question, “Do you want to coexist with the State of Israel?” He said, “No.” He said, “No.” Hamas doesn’t want peace or reconciliation or coexistence. It wants to utterly destroy the State of Israel.