

Gilman Defends Israeli Actions In Mid-East Crisis

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Rep. Benjamin A. Gilman (22nd District — New York), a senior Member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Ranking Minority Member on the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, called upon his colleagues to "continue the battle against the forces of terror alongside Israel, our most resolute ally in the Middle East, and one of our most loyal friends and allies in the world."

Congressman Gilman's remarks were made in the wake of the murder of Lt. Col. William Higgins, U.S.M.C., and the threats of further murders by Hezbollah, a terrorist organization.

"In an unprecedented gesture by a government that is unyielding in both its counterterrorism policy and its loyalty to the United States, Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin has proposed the exchange of hostages of all nationalities for Shiite prisoners held by Israel," pointed out Gilman. "We applaud Israel for this important gesture."

For the past three years, Shiite Muslim factions held several Israeli soldiers prisoner. "Throughout that period," stated Rep. Gilman, "the Israeli government exhausted every peaceful means in an attempt to secure their release. Unfortunately, similar to the efforts of the United States government to free the hostages, all of these attempts have been futile."

"For these apparent reasons," Rep. Gilman continued, Israel apprehended Shiekh Abd El Karim Obeid, the terrorist allegedly responsible for planning and participating in many terrorist operations, including the abduction of Col. Higgins."

Referring to the execution of Lt. Col. Higgins, an

AJC Statement On The Murder Of Col. Higgins & Israel's Seizure Of Sheikh Obeid

NEW YORK — The following statement was issued by Harvey Feldman, International Relations Director of the American Jewish Committee, on the murder of Colonel Higgins and Israel's seizure of Sheikh Obeid:

"As Americans, we bitterly condemn those responsible for the murder of Colonel Higgins. Our hearts go out to his wife, Major Robin Higgins, and his daughter, Christine.

"We recall that this self-styled 'Party of God' is precisely the group that claimed 'credit' for the truck bombing that killed our Marines in Beirut in 1983 and again in 1984. They have been involved in

act that Gilman said "shocked and appalled the entire civilized world," Congressman Gilman noted that "it is incumbent upon all of us to assign culpability for that tragedy to those who are responsible for it. Operating out of Beirut, with the explicit and implicit support of the Iranian government, Hezbollah is responsible for killing over 300 Americans, more than 70 Frenchmen, and dozens of Israelis."

"Were it not for the vigilance and cooperation of the Israeli defense force," Gilman noted, "which has thwarted countless terrorist incursions, many additional lives would have been forfeit."

Rep. Gilman, in applauding Israel's actions, again underscored the faithfulness of "our most resolute ally in the Middle East."

assassinations in the Middle East and in Europe, the destruction of airliners in flight, and the seizure of hostages and murder of civilians in Lebanon.

"Some have been highly critical of Israel for its seizure of Sheikh Obeid, and have equated it with the 'Party of God' abducting Colonel Higgins. But the Marine Colonel was part of a UN peace-keeping mission, while Obeid was the commander of assassination brigades. There can be no equivalence.

"To say that international law forbids seizing killers where you find them is simply incorrect. In fact, U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency personnel have several times seized drug lords on the territory of other countries, and we all recall the bombing of Libya in response to terrorist attacks on U.S. servicemen in Berlin. Israel, like other nations, has the right to take direct action against those who attack its citizens or plan terrorist acts on Israeli territory.

"Hindsight may make us wish for different outcomes, but we must be careful not to confuse the victims of terrorism with those who plan it."

WASHINGTON (JTA) — President Bush's nominee for ambassador to the Vatican said recently that he was "cautiously optimistic" that Pope John Paul II would eventually grant diplomatic recognition to Israel.

Sen. Joseph Biden (D-Del.), who questioned Melady, noted that the Vatican recognizes Israel's right to exist and that John Paul II has met Israeli officials on several occasions.

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