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Biden Reassures AIPAC on Iran

UN Clears Israel of Killing Baby in Gaza

A United Nations report has cleared Israel in the death of the infant son of a BBC employee during Operation Pillar of Defense, in November. The death of 11-month-old Omar Jihad al-Mishrawi, the son of BBC Arabic journalist Jihad al-Mishrawi, garnered more than usual media attention and focused anger on Israel, which was blamed for the death.

Instead, the report suggests the baby was hit by shrapnel from a rocket fired by Palestinians that was aimed at Israel, but missed its mark.

Images of the bereaved father tearfully holding the corpse of his baby went around the world during Operation Pillar of Defense, the eight-day military campaign during which the Israeli Air Force carried out 1,500 air strikes on Gaza and Palestinian terrorists fired about 1,500 rockets at Israel's south.

Several press reports attributed the child's death to Israeli shrapnel that entered his home in the Zaytoun neighborhood of Gaza City. In the wake of this incident and others during which Palestinian civilians were hurt, human rights groups accused Israel of conducting its air strikes without regard for civilians in Gaza.

The Palestinian Center for Human rights had claimed that "an Israeli warplane fired a missile at a house belonging to al-Mishrawi in the al-Zaytoun neighborhood of Gaza City."

NGO-Monitor, a watchdog group critical of anti-Israel bias among nonprofits involved in the Middle East conflict, issued a harsh statement slamming human rights groups and the media for having "fabricated" their versions of the event. [The Times of Israel]



Vice President Joe Biden tried to end any questions pro-Israel activists have about President Barack Obama's commitment to doing whatever is necessary to block Iran's nuclear program.

Obama's policy "is to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. Period. End of discussion," Biden told at-

tendees at the recent American-Israel Public Affairs Council annual conference in Washington. "Prevent — not contain — prevent," Biden added emphatically. "Big nations can't bluff and presidents of the United States cannot and do not bluff and President Barack Obama is not bluffing," Biden declared, in what he said was a preview of remarks Obama will make during his planned trip to Israel. "We are not looking for war [but] all options, including military force, are on the table," Biden said.

Biden said the U.S. is continuing to pursue a diplomatic solution with Iran, but is aware of the urgency of resolving the issue. "While that window is closing, we believe there is still time and space to achieve a peaceful outcome," he added. "God forbid, if we have to act, it's important that the rest of the world is with us and we have a united international community...We are sharpening the choice that the Iranian leadership has to make."

While much of Biden's 35-minute address to AIPAC got an enthusiastic reception, his remarks about Iran were met with lukewarm applause from the delegates. But AIPAC spokesman Marshall Wittmann praised the remarks. "The Vice President today made a very important statement that the President is not bluffing in his commitment to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon," Wittmann said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who spoke to the conference via satellite a few minutes after the Vice President, framed the challenge from Iran somewhat differently. He spoke not just of keeping Iran from producing a weapon, but of blocking Tehran from achieving nuclear capability.

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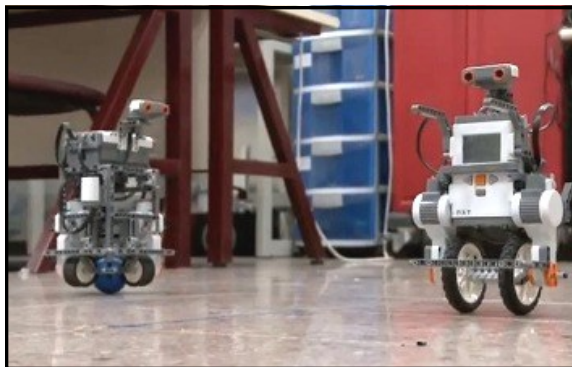
Ben-Gurion University Receives Helmsley Foundation Grant to Establish New Robotics Center

The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust Fund is providing more than \$6.2 million to Ben-Gurion University of the Negev for multidisciplinary, application-oriented, robotics research and systems development.

The grant will be used to establish the ABC Robotics Center. The acronym stands for agricultural, biological and cognitive robotics. Research and development will focus on medical, service, industrial, and agricultural robotics.

“The human interface is critical to the successful integration of robots within society,” says Prof. Dan Blumberg, deputy vice president and dean for research and development at Ben-Gurion University. “Robots will need to be equipped with specific physical and behavioral characteristics to make interaction comfortable and natural to humans. “This important component will be addressed by research seeking understanding of cognitive processes in humans and animals in order to create autonomous robots that can interact intuitively with humans and in human environments,” Blumberg said.

Research will also be conducted to gain an improved un-



derstanding of the principles of intelligence based on insights gained in these robotic experiments. A portion of the grant will provide fellowships to postdoctoral and doctoral students, updated technological equipment, and additional faculty positions.

BGU has achieved worldwide recognition in robotics with advanced laboratories where substantial, cutting-edge research is conducted in cooperation with leading international research groups.

With more than 20 years of accumulated experience, BGU is a leader in the field, with scientists conducting applied research in robotics technologies relevant to agricultural, industrial, safety, and security tasks, as well as basic research in mechanical design, algorithms, cognition, and neurosciences.

“This grant provides an exciting opportunity for BGU to attract more world class robotics experts, fund important projects and enhance the training of students in medical, cognitive, and agricultural robotics development,” said Doron Krakow, executive vice president of American Associates, Ben-Gurion University of Negev. “We are both pleased and proud to be partnering with the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust in pursuit of research excellence in the field of robotics.” [Ben-Gurion University of the Negev]

(AIPAC—Continued from previous page)

“We have to stop its nuclear enrichment program before it’s too late,” Netanyahu said. “Words alone will not stop Iran. Sanctions alone will not stop Iran. Sanctions must be coupled with a clear and credible military threat if diplomacy and sanctions fail,” the prime minister said. He also suggested that the international talks with Iran were simply an opportunity for Tehran to buy time to continue its nuclear efforts.

In addition to the differing emphasis on Iran, Biden and Netanyahu took somewhat dissonant tacks on Israeli-Palestinian peace. Biden spoke of Israel and a Palestinian state living side-by-side, while Netanyahu — who has spoken of a two-state solution — suggested that interim steps towards peace might be more realistic than trying to achieve a sweeping resolution to the long-running conflict. “We’re under no illusions about how difficult it will be to achieve,” Biden said. “It’s going to require hard steps from both sides [but] we all have a profound interest in peace... We’ve got to get caught trying ... We make no apologies for continuing to pursue that goal.”

“Israel is prepared for a meaningful compromise but as

Israel’s prime minister, I will never compromise on our security,” Netanyahu said. “We must work together to find a realistic path forward. I think that path has to be a measured, step-by-step process ... A peace you cannot defend will not hold for 5 minutes.”

Biden minimized the disagreements between Israel and the U.S., saying they’re limited to “tactics” and entirely routine. “We may not always agree on tactics,” he said. “We’ve always disagreed at some point or another on tactics. But, ladies and gentlemen, we have never disagreed on the strategic imperative that Israel must be able to protect its own, must be able to do it on its own, and we must always stand with Israel to be sure that can happen,” Biden said.

Many speakers at the AIPAC event, from both Israel and the U.S., portrayed the threat of U.S. and/or Israeli military action as so significant that it might prompt Iran to abandon its nuclear program. “The only way to dissuade the Iranians from the path they’re on is for them to believe the United States and Israel will act together,” Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) said during a panel discussion shortly before Biden spoke.

[POLITICO LLC]