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## Netanyahu's Lies and the Politicians Who Swallow Them

### The Lobby v. America

By RAMZY BAROUD

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As I listened to Israeli 2010 Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu address an animated crowd of supporters on March 22, I felt physically sick. The man has already displayed time and again a complete lack of moral sense or ethical framework in his words and actions. In his recent arguments, he once again twisted history, manipulated facts and fabricated his own selective, self-interested and highly questionable narrative. Netanyahu, a colonialist from a faraway land, also had the audacity to convince himself and a few others that he had legal, moral and historic rights over my land. While I am the son of a Palestinian family rooted in Palestine since time immemorial, Netanyahu is the son of an immigrant from Lithuania. While he giddily robs more Palestinian land in Jerusalem, I live in exile.

Netanyahu was addressing the annual conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). The 'powerful' lobby group encompasses a large conglomerate of rightwing Zionist politicians and lobbyists and is seen by many as the most instrumental platform that influences – and, to a large degree, controls – US foreign policy regarding Palestine, Israel and the entire Middle East.

AIPAC is dangerous for many reasons. For one, it's not a lobby group in the conventional sense - meaning a group of well-paid lobbyists harassing US Congressmen with telephone calls with the hope of advancing the agenda of their benefactors (in this case, the state of Israel). The pro-Israel lobby has actually grown and morphed into a political body that is embedded within all branches of the US government, as well as the media, academia and elsewhere. It is no secret that the neo-conservative cliques of politicians who engineered, steered and to an extent continue to influence US war policy are in fact a mere component of the same 'lobby'.

While Jewish communities in the US may not be united in their support of the largely rightwing and hawkish Zionist lobby groups, both major political parties in the US and all branches of the government stand in complete support of Israel. The AIPAC annual conference is almost mandatory for them. Sadly, Netanyahu's speech before AIPAC is of equal, if not of greater import to some of them than the State of the Union address. Following Obama's address in 2010, many US politicians openly voiced criticism of his take on many issues. But few dare challenge Netanyahu on much of the malice he spewed on March 22.

Americans need to realize that this is no longer about Palestine and Israel. It is now about their own country, their own sovereignty and the future of their own democracy. They must ask hard questions and refuse to settle for sentimental answers. How could America be so divided on so many issues, yet so united on the 'cause of Israel'? Where does a feeble politician like Netanyahu find the courage to defy the president of the very country that supplied his own with many billions of taxpayer dollars? Of course, we know that much of the fund was used to occupy, torment and wage war on Palestinians for many years. This is the atrocious fact that Americans need to understand fully: Israeli war crimes were made possible because of American funds, weapons and political cover. America is not an outside party to the conflict. It has done more than its fair share in the ongoing Palestinian tragedy.

Even if one is somehow convinced by the most recent and unusually strong stance taken by the Obama administration regarding Israel's settlement policy in East Jerusalem, there still remains the question of what comes next. When the President of the United States articulates a seemingly unmovable US position that rejects the building of more illegal settlements that would preclude any possible peace talks, and yet he fails to weaken Israel's resolve even by an iota, some questions must be asked. Will the US use its leverage to twist Israel's arm to respect international law? Will it at least hold on to some of the billions of dollars of funds that it continues to pour into Israel - especially as the US undergoes an unprecedented financial crisis, resulting in growing poverty and homelessness?

The answer might be in the UPI report on March 26, citing Israeli daily newspaper Haaretz:

"Despite the sharpest rift in decades between Israel and the United States, the Pentagon is reported to have given the green light to the \$250 million sale of C-130J transport aircraft to Israel...The deal...involves three 'Super Hercules' aircraft manufactured especially to the Israeli air force's requirements. (The report) indicates that despite the belief among the United States' top military commanders that Israel's failure to reach a peaceful settlement with the Palestinians is undermining U.S. influence and standing in the Muslim world and thus endangering its forces, the Pentagon is prepared to maintain Israel's military superiority in the Middle East."

The timing and the nature of the 'sale' signify the following: first, if the US government was ready to actively back up its supposed disagreement with Israel, it would have stopped this unwarranted sale. Second, considering that the deal was made through the Pentagon, the very platform used to express concern and call for at least a reconsideration of US policy in the region, the sale is both a slap on the face of the US military, and a veiled apology to Israel. Third, if the failure to reexamine this absence relationship continues, then there is absolutely no doubt left that US foreign policy in the Middle East is indeed held hostage to Israeli, not American priorities, misguided at times as they maybe.

Those individuals in the US government, military and media that have the courage and the platform to confront Israel must take the opportunity. They should not succumb to intimidation or fear, nor should they be swayed by Netanyahu's lies. The fact is, Netanyahu will continue to lie; it's what he does best. The onus is on those US politicians who readily and barefacedly continue to give the professional liar a standing ovation following every statement he utters. And it is only really they who give any power to the 'powerful' lobby.