

RUSH!

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U.S. TO ARAFAT: COMPLY WITH OSLO AGREEMENTS OR LOSE AID

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Terrorism has shattered the prospects for Israeli–Palestinian peace once again. Bombings on July 30 in Jerusalem killed 13 Israelis and two Arab suicide bombers, and dealt a mortal blow to the already ailing peace talks that began in Oslo in 1993. Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has violated the Oslo accords by failing to halt anti-Israeli terrorism, by ending security cooperation with Israel, and by indulging in inflammatory rhetoric that threatens to incite further anti-Israeli violence. The Clinton Administration is seeking to revive negotiations, but the Oslo peace talks are doomed to failure unless Arafat complies with all the terms in the agreements he already has made.

Congress must send a strong signal that enough is enough. It should condition U.S. aid to Arafat's Palestinian Authority (PA)—currently about \$100 million per year—on concrete Palestinian moves to fulfill Oslo commitments by cracking down on terrorism, amending the Palestinian Covenant, and negotiating in good faith. Until these conditions are satisfied, Congress should refuse to renew the 1993 Middle East Peace Facilitation Act (MEPFA) authorizing the U.S. aid to the PA, which expired August 12.

The Oslo Meltdown. Although the proximate cause of the current crisis in Israeli–Palestinian peacemaking was the suicide bombings, the Oslo accords already had been severely undermined. In February and March of 1996, groups claiming responsibility for the July bombings— Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement) and Palestinian Islamic Jihad—perpetrated four terrorist bombings, killing 61 Israelis, to paralyze the negotiations. Arafat was forced to crack down on these groups, arresting roughly 1,500 Islamic militants opposed to peace. However, following Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's May 1996 election and a prolonged deadlock in negotiations, Arafat gradually released all but about 100 of them. He sought to court the Islamic radicals, giving them increased freedom of action as peace negotiations stalled and, on May 25, proclaiming Hamas to be a "patriotic movement." Such actions violate his Oslo commitments to apprehend, prosecute, and punish terrorists and to take legal action to prevent further incitement of violence within his jurisdiction.

Besides failing to suppress terrorism, the PA has failed to provide full security cooperation with Israel as mandated by the Oslo agreement. The PA neglected its commitment to confiscate all illegal arms and refused repeated Israeli requests to extradite known Palestinian terrorists. In March, Arafat suspended security cooperation and broke off negotiations when Israel initiated construction of a housing project in the Har Homa area of Jerusalem. Even worse, Palestinian police have launched terrorist attacks against Israelis. Last month, Israeli police arrested three Palestinian security police participat-

ing in a terrorist operation against Israeli West Bank settlers. Palestinian police chief General Ghazi Jabali reportedly had helped to organize the attack. The Israeli government issued a warrant for Jabali's arrest on July 31.

Arafat's bellicose rhetoric also raises severe doubts about his peaceful intentions. He has called repeatedly for a jihad (holy war) to liberate Jerusalem and has praised dead terrorists as "martyrs." On August 7, Arafat lashed out at Israel's security crackdown, warning that "Netanyahu has declared war on us and we have to prepare for what will come." He compared the present crisis to the 1982 siege of Beirut, the final phase of Israel's military campaign to drive the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) out of Lebanon. At a minimum, such talk violates his Oslo commitment to abstain from hostile propaganda and incitement. It also raises suspicions that he is laying the groundwork for orchestrated political violence like the riots he incited in September 1996 by falsely charging that a new exit to a Jerusalem archaeological tunnel defiled Muslim holy sites located 250 yards away. During those riots, Palestinian police fired on Israeli troops, thereby undermining a cornerstone of the Oslo accords: Palestinian renunciation of violence.

Arafat reinforces Israeli mistrust by failing to purge calls for violence and the destruction of Israel from the PLO charter, the Palestinian Covenant. Changes in the covenant are required by the 1993 Oslo agreement, the 1995 Oslo II agreement, and the Note for the Record attached to the January 1997 Hebron Protocol, yet the Palestinians refuse to follow through on pledges to amend the covenant. This feeds Israeli suspicions that Arafat engages in strategic deception and could revert to the "war process" once he has extracted everything he can from the peace process.

Strong U.S. Pressure Needed on Arafat. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright indicated in an August 6 speech that radical diplomatic surgery is required to revive the dying Oslo negotiations. She hinted at accelerating the final status talks to restore negotiation momentum, an idea broached by Netanyahu in April but rejected by Arafat. Whatever strategy the Clinton Administration adopts must be based on the proposition that the PA must fulfill the terms of past agreements before it will be trusted to negotiate future agreements. Disillusioned Israelis are increasingly reluctant to trade more land for promises that go unfulfilled. To underscore this message, Congress should refuse to approve a six-month extension of the MEPFA until Arafat has fulfilled obligations to:

- **Systematically root out terrorism.** The PA must take concrete steps to apprehend, prosecute, and punish terrorists; outlaw Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, confiscate their weapons, and dismantle their support infrastructure; purge Hamas supporters from the Palestinian police; and arrest and prosecute police officials who have plotted terrorist attacks.
- **Restore full security cooperation with Israel.** The PA must resume intelligence-sharing with Israeli security officials, transfer to Israel jailed terrorists accused of murdering Israelis, and reduce the size of the Palestinian police force from roughly 50,000 to 24,000, according to the Oslo II agreement.
- **Amend the Palestinian Covenant and halt inflammatory rhetoric.** These actions will help restore Israeli confidence that Arafat is committed to peace and will not resort to further political violence to gain additional concessions from Israel.

The expiration of the MEPFA requires the closing of the PLO office in Washington and a cutoff of direct U.S. aid to the Palestinians. These measures should help Arafat understand that Washington intends to hold him to his commitments and disabuse him of notions that he can exploit the benefit of the doubt accorded to him by "peace processors" in the Clinton Administration. This tough approach should not jeopardize the U.S. role as honest broker in future Arab-Israeli peace negotiations. An honest broker cannot stand by while the agreement it has brokered is dishonestly broken. Moreover, unless the United States can pressure Arafat to comply with his past commitments, there will be no future Arab-Israeli peace agreements to broker.