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# Program Brief

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## **“September 11: Repercussions for Israel And the Peace Process” A Presentation by Ambassador Zalman Shoval**

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“Having suffered many attacks of terrorism, Israel fully understands that the United States is at war and is prepared to aid in the effort,” according to Ambassador Zalman Shoval, Former Israeli Ambassador to the United States and current Political Advisor to Prime Minister Sharon, who spoke at a luncheon discussion at the Nixon Center in Washington, D.C on Wednesday, October 24. Following the address, Director of Regional Strategic Programs Geoffrey Kemp moderated a brief question-and-answer session between Ambassador Shoval and the attendees.

Ambassador Shoval opened his address by noting the sentiment of worldwide understanding that pervades in the aftermath of September 11. Shoval stated that, although the events of September 11 have markedly changed the world order, it is risky to simply say that “everything has changed.” While the terrorist attacks in New York, Virginia, and Pennsylvania shocked both the United States and the rest of the world, one cannot claim that these attacks were entirely unexpected.

In addressing world terrorism, the United States and its allies must take precautions not to “repeat old mistakes.” The common assumption that all terrorists are ruled by a universal set of values must be avoided if the war on terrorism is to be successful. Another common misconception that

has surfaced in the recent weeks is that the events of September 11 have incited a “war between civilizations.” Not only is this supposition insulting to the Islamic world, but it also ignores the many Islamic states that have joined the anti-terrorism campaign in the recent weeks. Although Islam has a more political nature than many other religions and consequently can become a conduit for politics, characterizing the results of September 11 as a “war against civilizations” is patently incorrect.

Ambassador Shoval identified that “capabilities and intentions” should be the two foci of the war on terrorism. Noting the possibility that rogue states may be capable of using more sophisticated methods of terrorism, Shoval stated that the increased threat of terrorism has reinforced the need for a missile defense system. Additionally, the strategic alliance between the United States and Israel is increasingly important in both identifying the sources and planning the response to September 11.

“Radical elements have come to believe that they could change the rules of the game,” explained Ambassador Shoval, in reference to the many groups in the world that use terrorism as a means of promoting their political ends. Faced with the reality of their strategic inferiority, these groups

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employ violent methods in an attempt to alter their subordinate status. Shoval declared Yasser Arafat's goal to be the replacement of Israel with a Palestinian state, and said that Israel has only recently begun to become cognizant of this reality.

The United States has acknowledged that vehement anti-American sentiment in the Muslim world was a formative influence on both the attacks of September 11 and the worldwide response. Ambassador Shoval asserted that Yasser Arafat and his anti-American media have greatly exacerbated this situation, quoting Arafat's recent proclamation that declared suicide bombers to be "the salt of the earth, the engines of history, and the most honorable among us." Shoval remarked that the United States has several true friends in the Middle East, including Turkey, Jordan, and Israel, and many "fair-weather friends." Implying that Arafat falls into the latter category, Shoval noted that Arafat has not been keeping his word to shut down and arrest terrorists in Palestine.

Regarding Israeli policy since September 11, Shoval noted that Israel is facing the multi-faceted challenge of promoting stability in its own region while remaining aligned with the United States. In addressing the affects of September 11 on the peace process, Shoval stated that he does not necessarily feel that September 11 has provided a clear motive for resolution of the conflict. Recalling the unfulfilled prediction that the fall of the Soviet Union would lead to peace in the Middle East, Shoval voiced his belief that although the new war on terrorism may have some effect on the peace process, the real determinants of the situation come from within the region itself. He claimed that the underlying source of the problem is the Palestinians' refusal to recognize Israel's right to a homeland.

While acknowledging that it is too early to determine if the United States will alter its alliances to ensure the maximum success of its war on terrorism, Shoval warned that Arab states are trying to persuade the United States to endorse their goals in exchange for Arab states' support in the campaign against terrorism. Although Arafat is not generally recognized as a likely leader in the peace process, he does occasionally change his

stance when he finds it to be convenient. One should not, however, be misled by Arafat's guise as a peace leader; in reality, Arafat views himself not only as the Palestinean leader, but also as the premier Arab leader, and thus ultimately the promoter of the goals of the Arab nation. In addressing the possibility of peace in the near future, Shoval emphasized that influence of the pro-peace camp in Israel has been greatly lessened by the recent assassination of Minister of Tourism Rehavam Zeevi.

Shoval concluded by stating that the peace process is at a crossroads and could take one of two courses in response to the effects of September 11. The Palestinians may successfully bargain with the United States for increased support of their cause in exchange for support against terrorism, or the relative position of the Palestinians may remain unchanged. Shoval strongly discouraged American alliance-forming without consultation with Israel. He advised that U.S. participation in the peace process adhere to the Mitchell report with the following three conditions: that a permanent solution is not negotiated now, that both sides commit to nonviolence, and that Palestinian statehood come about only as a result of negotiations.

*This Program Brief was prepared by Nixon Center Intern Elizabeth Murray.*

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