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US SENATOR BIDEN'S "I AM A ZIONIST" INTERVIEW ON SHALOM TV SEEN WORLDWIDE

Arab news outlets also cite his description of Israel as America's "single greatest strength" in the Middle East

August 27, 2008 (Fort Lee, NJ) -- Following his selection as Barack Obama's vice presidential running mate, US Senator Joseph R. Biden's interview with Shalom TV on America and Israel has been quoted and played throughout the world-- including news outlets in Iran and Syria, and the Al Jazeera network.



Conducted in Washington DC in March 2007, in the midst of his Democratic presidential primary bid, Senator Biden told Shalom TV President Mark S. Golub of his longstanding commitment to Israel, calling the country "the single greatest strength America has in the Middle East."

"I am a Zionist," said Senator Biden. "You don't have to be a Jew to be a Zionist."

Senator Biden went on to point out that without Israel, one could only imagine how many battleships and troops America would have to station in the Middle East.

He also decried as "insulting" the notion that any American could suggest that Israel is somehow the cause of the war in Iraq.

"If, tomorrow, peace broke out between Israelis and Palestinians, does anybody think there wouldn't be a full-blown war in Iraq? And, conversely, if Iraq were transported to Mars, does anyone think there would not be terrorism visited upon the Israelis every day?

"So let's get it straight. Israel is not the cause of Iraq. Iraq being settled or not settled has nothing to do with Israel's conduct."

The Senator also expressed a sensitivity and empathy for Israelis who have had to live with terrorism.

"[From 9/11], Americans can taste what it must feel like for every Israeli mother and father when they send their kid out to school with their lunch to put them on a bus, on a bicycle or to walk; and they pray to God that cell phone doesn't ring."

Asked about Jonathan Pollard, sentenced to life-imprisonment for giving classified information to the State of Israel, Senator Biden opened the door to leniency, but not a pardon.

"There's a rationale, in my view, why Pollard should be given leniency. But there is not a rationale to say, 'What happened did not happen and should be pardoned.'"

Shalom TV, an American cable television network devoted to Jewish public affairs and Jewish culture, is available free of charge in twenty million homes across the US. Participating cable companies include Comcast, Verizon FiOS, Time Warner, Bright House, MetroCast, Service Electric, and Blue Ridge Communications. Additional information on the English-language service, including programming information, is available at www.shalomtv.com.



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[A transcript of Shalom TV's interview with Senator Biden is located below.]

SHALOM TV: Many Americans believe there's a link between America's war in Iraq and the State of Israel and that if America didn't have such a commitment to the state of Israel, there wouldn't be these problems in Iraq. What would you say to anyone who's expressed that thought to you?

SENATOR BIDEN: It's bizarre.

When the Baker Commission filed its report saying peace in Israel is related to Iraq, I was the first and only person in Congress to point out [that] if, tomorrow, peace broke out between Israelis and Palestinians, does anybody think there wouldn't be a full-blown war in Iraq?

And, conversely, if Iraq were transported to Mars, does anyone think there would not be terrorism visited upon the Israelis every day?



The difference between now and before 9/11: many Americans can taste what it must feel like for every Israeli mother and father when they send their kid out to school with their lunch to put them on a bus, on a bicycle or to walk; and they pray to God that cell phone doesn't ring.

Every day, every day.

So let's get it straight. Israel is not the cause of Iraq. Iraq being settled or not settled has nothing to do with Israel's conduct.

The second part is: people should understand by now that Israel is the single greatest strength America has in the Middle East.

Imagine our circumstance in the world were there no Israel. How many battleships would there be? How many troops would be stationed?

So I find it not only incorrect, but mildly insulting.

SHALOM TV: In the American Jewish community, there's sensitivity to the plight of Jonathan Pollard. What should be done now with Jonathan Pollard?

SENATOR BIDEN: If we don't want to play into the argument that Americans who support Israel have dual loyalties, then you can't deal with Pollard. He has to serve his sentence.

There's a rationale, in my view, why Pollard should be given leniency. But there is not a rationale to say, "What happened did not happen and should be pardoned."

I was raised by a righteous Christian. My father was a gentle man. He was a white-collar worker, high-school educated but a student of history and a devoted supporter of Israel.

My father could not understand how people could [fail to understand] that without an Israel no Jew in the world was safe. He couldn't understand how support [for Israel] could be translated into being un-American.

My worry is that, if I were president, to go and pardon Pollard would make a lie out of the notion that there are certain rules. Period. You cannot give classified information. Period. Even to a friend. If this were great Britain, it would be the same thing.

So the standard has to be maintained, in my view.

SHALOM TV: Have you ever been at a Seder?

SENATOR BIDEN: I have.

SHALOM TV: Give us one Seder memory.

SENATOR BIDEN: My son married a young woman whose mother and whole family is a very prominent Jewish family in the state of Delaware, the Bergers.

Probably my most poignant Seder memory is not with the Bergers, but what happened right after I came back from meeting Golda Meir [in 1973].

I had predicted that something was going on in Egypt. And I remember people talking about what it meant to them if Israel were actually defeated.

And there is this inextricable tie between culture, religion, [and] ethnicity that most people don't fully understand--that is unique and so *strong* with Jews worldwide.

When I was a young Senator, I used to say, "If I were a Jew I'd be a Zionist."

I am a Zionist. You don't have to be a Jew to be a Zionist.
