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Calls on Egypt to Cease Slanted Anti-Israel Rhetoric, Help Stop Palestinian Violence

Washington, DC - Upset with Egypt's weak engagement in the Mideast peace process and the biased coverage of both Israel and America's war on terrorism that occurs in some of Egypt's media, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9) last week met with visiting Egyptian officials in his Washington, DC office to demand that their country take a more visible, active and positive role in support of peace between the Palestinians and Israel.

Rothman called on Egypt to become more positively engaged in the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. As the violence against innocent Israelis continues, Rothman described Egypt's lack of involvement as "unacceptable." He said that such indifference could potentially be devastating for Egypt itself. "As Israel's neighbor to the southwest and as a partner in previous peace agreements with Israel, Egypt has an obligation to facilitate the peace process and help stop the intifadah which continues to threaten Israel and kill hundreds of innocent Israelis," Rothman said. "If President Mubarak wants there to be peace in the region, it is imperative that he use his leadership role to work with Arafat and cease the Palestinian violence. Then he must help the two sides sit down at the table to achieve a meaningful and lasting peace agreement. President Mubarak must recognize that if the unrest in the area continues to rage out of control, his own country could be at risk to extreme fundamentalists. It is in his own interest to become more positively involved in the peace process."

Rothman also expressed his displeasure with the Egyptian media, which is mainly controlled by the Egyptian government, for its often one-sided view of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians and its false accusations of America committing acts of terror against Muslims. Citing recent Washington Post articles that describe Egyptian press reports as "hostile propaganda," Rothman advised the representatives of the Egyptian government that the United States Congress will no longer tolerate Egypt's turning a blind eye to their anti-Israel media -- especially in light of Egypt's continuing to receive billions of dollars in U.S. military and economic aid.

"The biased coverage against Israel and the United States from the Egyptian press is absolutely unacceptable and contributes to the growing resentment within American toward Egypt," Rothman said. "The onus is upon President Mubarak to reverse this trend and allow a free press to present a balanced version of the news. We can no longer allow the words of the Egyptian media to foster hatred and turn that country into a breeding ground for terrorists."

Rothman cited Egypt's previous commitment to peace with Israel and Egypt's efforts to assist the United States military as reasons to believe the country has the potential to become a better and more trusted partner. Egypt, which is the second largest recipient of foreign aid from the United States after Israel, became so when it made peace with Israel in 1979. Since then, Egypt has worked with the United States in military and joint operations on a regular basis, shared intelligence gathering, and worked collectively in the region to be a stabilizing force for peace. In the Persian Gulf in 1991, Egypt was one of the few Arab nations to attempt to negotiate an end to the war. When negotiations failed, Egypt provided 30,000 troops to assist in the liberation of Kuwait, but not to attack or occupy Iraq. Egyptian troops currently are involved in peacekeeping missions in Somalia and Yugoslavia.

The Egyptian officials who met with Rothman were: Major General Mohamed Said El Assar, Assistant to the Defense Minister for Armament; Major General Mahmoud Moawad, Defense, Military, Naval & Air Attache of Egypt to the U.S.; Major General Fouad Abd El Halim, Director, Armament Branch; Major General Fouad Arafa, Assistant to the Director, Egyptian Military Intelligence Agency; Brigadier General Ahmed El Motaz, Chief, Egyptian-American Relations Branch.

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