



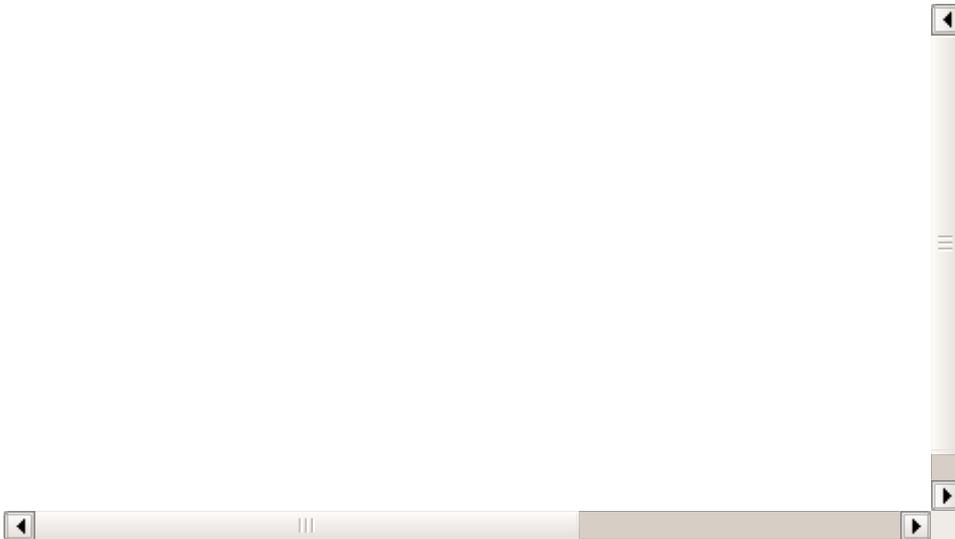
Conference Keynotes

Remarks by Denis McDonough, Deputy National Security Advisor

[Denis McDonough](#)

Also available in [العربية](#)

May 7, 2012



Deputy National Security Advisor Denis McDonough believes that the relationship between President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu is “workmanlike” and enables the two leaders to immediately address the important issues on their agendas.

Speaking to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy’s Weinberg Founders Conference, McDonough stated that descriptions of tension between Obama and Netanyahu are a “funhouse mirror” distortion of reality. The official said that “no President since Harry Truman has done as much for Israel’s security as Barack Obama.” He cited record levels of U.S. security assistance, including the Iron Dome anti-missile system, extensive joint military maneuvers, and U.S. intervention when the Israeli embassy in Cairo was being mobbed.

He said that the two countries have “an almost identical assessment of timelines” to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. “We believe the policy we are pursuing is

working and will give us the best opportunity to address the challenge once and for all,” he said, adding that in addition to diplomacy and sanctions, “all options are on the table.”

“We know what we have to get done and when we have to get it done by,” McDonough said. Iran is more isolated and its legitimacy more questioned than at any time since the 1979 revolution due to international sanctions and Tehran’s support for the regime of Bashar Assad in Syria.

The Obama administration believes that the Arab Spring is advancing American values by promoting democracy and empowering larger groups of people. At the same time, the White House has “eyes wide open” with regard to the incoming Islamist government in Egypt and is focusing on such areas as the new government’s commitment to protecting individual rights, strengthening civil society, the treatment of Coptic Christians, forsaking violence, cooperating on counter terrorism, maintaining the peace treaty with Israel, and the security of the Sinai peninsula. McDonough added that unlike the Mubarak regime, today’s Egyptian government lacks a single interlocutor with whom to make policy.

McDonough defended the administration’s Syria policy, stating that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is working with the United Nations, regional allies, and the Friends of Syria working group to strengthen the Syrian opposition and hasten the transition to a new government. He added that Clinton is working with the Russians and the Chinese to apply pressure from nontraditional sources as well as taking aggressive action on the “lifelines” that keep regime in place through economic sanctions. “We have a plan for every contingency.... We don’t believe that intervention hastens the demise of the regime.... We believe we have the winning recipe,” he said.

[Download a transcript of Denis McDonough's remarks and the Q&A session.](#)