

U.S. Government Officials Address Jewish Community Security Issues at 2nd Agudath Israel Legislative Breakfast



Rabbi David Zwiebel, Executive Vice President of Agudath Israel of America, speaking at the Agudath Israel of America Legislative Breakfast.

BY BORUCH SHUBERT

NEW YORK, N.Y. - A number of officials representing the United States government at key levels of influence addressed several hundred communal leaders at the Second Annual Legislative Breakfast of Agudath Israel of America early yesterday at the Down Town Association in Lower Manhattan. Speaking to the event's theme of "Safety and Security in Our Communities," officials outlined a variety of areas in which government agencies are acting vigorously to ensure the physical well-being of the greater Jewish community both domestically and overseas.

Loretta E. Lynch, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, delivered the Keynote Address. She was introduced by breakfast chair, Joseph Zelmanovitz. Ms. Lynch noted that - with New York City continuing to be a major target for potential terrorists - her office has expanded its focus from the aggressive pursuit of terrorist prosecutions to include an emphasis on the prevention of terrorist acts.

"We work closely with the FBI and the New York Police Department to immediately investigate any threats of terrorism," Lynch asserted, highlighting multiple cases wherein potential attacks were thwarted on public transportation and on highly-populated areas. Detailing specific concerns in this regard, the U.S. Attorney informed the audience that the authorities are on the lookout for al-Qaida-mobilized "lone-wolf" individuals, who may attempt to commit acts of terror on their own; homegrown U.S.-based terrorists; and global terror cells that gain strength and adherents through strategic communications via electronic media. She noted that more than 400 terrorists have been convicted in this country during the decade since the 9/11 attacks.

Ms. Lynch was joined at the breakfast by who has served as deputy chief of the criminal unit and who yesterday was named criminal division chief.

Special greetings were extended to the audience from Jarrod Bernstein, President Obama's recently appointed Director of Jewish Outreach, who made his first public appearance in his new role. Bernstein was introduced by Rabbi David Zwiebel, Executive Vice President of Agudath Israel, who recounted how, just two days before this past Yom Kippur, he received word that a large shipment of *lulavim* was being held

up at the airport due to security-related red tape, and how, after a quick phone call to Bernstein - at that point an official at the Department of Homeland Security - the *lulavim* were released within a few hours.

Speaking on behalf of the president, Bernstein stated that the administration is "working daily to ensure Israel's security." Elaborating on this point, he noted that President Obama has requested from Congress "the largest-ever amount of funding for military assistance for Israel"; that he spoke resolutely at the U.N. on behalf of Israel's vitality; and spends a significant amount of time advocating for increased sanctions against Iran.

Reprising his appearance at last year's Legislative Breakfast, Senator Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) reiterated Congress' firm support for the security of Israel, specifically with regard to planned attempts to further cut off Iran's banking powers and to fully fund Israel's Iron Dome anti-missile system. Turning to the domestic front, Schumer stated that "Agudath Israel does an amazing job caring for people in need with its social services." He asserted that "we must cut our budgets carefully" so as not to endanger these vital services. "I have obtained many grants for the security of the community's shuls and yeshivos," the senator concluded, reaffirming his continuing close relationship with Agudath Israel.

The large audience - which included such dignitaries as FDNY Commissioner Sal Cassano, State Senator Daniel Squadron, Assemblymen Alec Brook-Krasny and Rory Lancman, and City Councilmembers Lew Fidler and Brad Lander - heard important remarks from several members of Congress with close ties to the Jewish community. Newly-elected Congressman Robert (Bob) Turner spoke about his appointments to the crucial Foreign Affairs and Homeland Security Committees, and criticized both the U.N. and Iran for their anti-Israel stances. "We have to work hard to get regime change in Iran," Turner declared.

Avowing Congress' strong backing of Israel, Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney recalled the unusually enthusiastic response from the entire membership of Congress when it was addressed by Prime Minister Netanyahu. Commenting on the dismal economy, Congressman Jerrold Nadler spoke against the idea of massive spending cuts by the government, noting that "the community needs housing and food assistance now more than ever." Separately, Nadler called on President Obama to criticize PA President Abbas for refusing to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, and insisted that "there is no greater danger in the world today than Iran" due to its nuclear intentions.

The audience also heard from community activist Abe Eisner - who read a message of support for Agudath Israel from Governor Andrew Cuomo; Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer; New York City Controller John Liu; and Rabbi Shmuel Lefkowitz, Agudath Israel's Vice President for Community Services, who highlighted the organization's many valuable social programs.

The Legislative Breakfast was chaired by Joseph Zelmanovitz, Esq., Partner in Stahl and Zelmanovitz, and was graciously sponsored by Health Plus, and Med Review and coordinated by the Friedlander group.



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