

**REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CHUCK HAGEL
ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE CENTENNIAL DINNER KEYNOTE
NEW YORK, NEW YORK
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2013**

Thank you, Abe, for your continued leadership, and for always articulating the ADL's important perspective on the challenges we face at home and abroad.

I appreciate the opportunity to be here with you tonight ... and congratulate the Anti-Defamation League on reaching its Centennial ... and for your recognition of my friend and predecessor, Leon Panetta, a remarkable public servant and a wonderful human being. He is one of those special leaders that America always produces at the time we need them the most.

Throughout his career, he embodied the ADL's fight for justice, equality, and security. The ADL has chosen well on its 100th Anniversary.

Your theme for your 100th Anniversary, "Imagine a World Without Hate," captures the hope and possibilities of mankind. There is no goal more worthy or more noble than world peace. A world of respect and dignity for all mankind.

And although that may seem impossible, we must keep trying. No organization has done more in pursuing this dream than the ADL. It is who you are. Year after year, decade after decade, you have fought against intolerance, prejudice, and injustice all over the world – including in America's armed forces.

The Department of Defense is proud to have worked with the ADL to make our military more open, equal, and just. One example of our partnership is at the Air Force Academy, where only a few years ago there were troubling accusations of religious intolerance and anti-Semitism. That began to change when the local ADL worked with leaders at the Academy to create a special course on respect for religious freedom, which is now required for all cadets.

Going forward, we will continue to build on this relationship, because there is so much we learn from each other. Both of our institutions are committed to strong national security, and both are committed to combatting hatred and bigotry. The ADL has never separated the two, for they are interconnected. You've shown that the strength of civil rights underpins strong national security.

This balance has been the essence of Leon Panetta's career. As strong as he is on security, he has always been just as strong on civil rights and equality.

As the Director of the U.S. Office for Civil Rights, one of his first government jobs, he pushed for equal education across the South. As a member of Congress and White House Chief of Staff, he worked to advance civil rights. And as Secretary of Defense, he oversaw the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," and opened combat positions for women.

The balance between security and civil rights sends an important message to the world. At the Department of Defense, we work to preserve America's individual liberties as well as defend our freedom.

When the Supreme Court issued its decision on the Defense of Marriage Act this summer, the Department of Defense immediately began working on providing the same benefits to all eligible spouses, regardless of sexual orientation. We did it because everyone who serves our country in uniform should receive the full benefits they earned, fairly and in accordance with the law. Everyone's rights must be protected.

This means that all spouses of service members are entitled to DoD ID cards, and the benefits that come with them. But several states are refusing to issue these IDs to same-sex

spouses at National Guard facilities. Not only does this violate the states' obligations under federal law, their actions have created hardship and inequality by forcing couples to travel long distances to federal military bases to obtain the ID cards they're entitled to.

This is wrong. It causes division among the ranks, and it furthers prejudice, which DoD has fought to extinguish.

Today, I directed the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, General Frank Grass, to take immediate action to remedy this situation. At my direction, he will meet with the Adjutants General from the states where these ID cards are being denied. The Adjutants General will be expected to comply with both lawful direction and DoD policy, in line with the practices of 45 other states and jurisdictions.

Whether they are responding to natural disasters here at home, in their states, or fighting in Afghanistan, our National Guardsmen all wear the uniform of the United States of America. They are serving this country. They – and their families – are entitled to all the benefits and respect accorded to all of our military men and women.

Our people are the foundation of a ready and capable force. And they always will be. Leon Panetta knows as well as anyone that the core responsibility of this job is people. The United States military is deeply respected by the American people because of the character, determination, resilience, and courage of our men and women in uniform – who have borne a heavy and constant burden since 9/11, along with their families.

Yet as we wind down the second of two of America's longest wars, we continue to face a complicated and volatile world. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Middle East, where the United States and our allies are facing an unprecedented set of complex challenges.

For Israel, this shifting landscape has brought new threats and new dynamics. Even as Israel takes important steps toward peace and the two-state solution, these challenges remain on its borders. There are no margins for Israel.

Egypt's future remains uncertain. There is a humanitarian crisis in Syria, with disease and hunger compounding the scourge of sectarian violence and civil war. These challenges demand unprecedented cooperation between the United States and Israel.

Israel's self-defense capabilities and its qualitative military edge are central to both Israel and U.S. security interests. The United States has provided important support for Israel's Iron Dome system, which has proven very successful in protecting Israeli citizens.

And earlier this year, the United States reached a historic agreement to open up even more advanced military capabilities to Israel. One of these capabilities is the V-22 Osprey, a tilt-rotor aircraft that will greatly enhance the range and effectiveness of Israeli special forces.

Tonight, I am pleased to announce that we are working with the Israeli government to provide them with six new V-22s. I have directed the Marine Corps to make sure this order is expedited. That means Israel will get six V-22s out of the next order to go on the assembly line, and they will be compatible with other IDF capabilities. The Israeli and American defense relationship is stronger than ever, and it will continue to strengthen.

Another area of our common security interests is preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

The United States is presently testing Iranian intentions for a diplomatic solution. As we engage Iran with our partners, we are very clear-eyed about reality in the Middle East. Iran is a state sponsor of terror, responsible for spreading hatred and extremism throughout the region.

But foreign policy is not a zero-sum game. If we can find ways to resolve disputes peacefully, we are wise to explore them.

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Engagement is not appeasement, nor is it containment. We know what those are, we know where they lead, and we will not pursue them.

And President Obama has repeatedly made clear that words are not enough. Action must match words.

We understand why this is so important to so many people. Because we've been to Yad Vashem.

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to revisit Yad Vashem. I had been there before, but this visit was special, because I brought my son, Ziller. I wanted him to see the harsh realities of the depths of evil, and the beautiful tribute to the victims of the past. Yad Vashem is an instruction for future generations – like all great memorials. A warning to never again stand idly by in the face of hatred and bigotry.

We know that ridding our world of hatred takes more than just work and imagination. It will always demand commitment, sacrifice, and courage. It demands that we must continue to march our armies of tolerance, equality, and justice around the globe.

And it demands that we remember the timeless questions of Rabbi Hillel – “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?”

As Leon Panetta often says, our “future is not guaranteed. You’ve got to work for it, and you have to fight for it.” With the continued help and leadership of the ADL, I know our country always will.

Thank you.

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