

VP Choice Pence Reaffirms Israel Devotion

Donald Trump may alarm Washington's foreign policy establishment with his "America First" rhetoric but Mike Pence, Trump's VP choice, reaffirms a commitment to the traditional "Israel First" doctrine, as Sam Hussein shows.

By Sam Hussein

Indiana Gov. (and Republican vice presidential nominee) Mike Pence addressed the Republican Convention on Wednesday night and declared: "And if the world knows nothing else, it will know this: America stands with Israel."

I've heard him say that before. Being a journalist based in the Washington, D.C. area, I try to ask tough questions of political figures when I can. Perhaps my favorite question is some variation of "do you acknowledge that Israel has nuclear weapons?" I've asked this of many political figures and virtually no one has given me a straightforward response.

But the most surreal – almost comical – response came from Donald Trump's VP pick in 2011. At the time, he was a congressman and vice-chair of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia:

Question: You've also served on the Foreign Affairs Committee. Do you know that Israel has nuclear weapons?

Pence: [long pause, looks down] I'm – I am aware that Israel is our most cherished ally. And I strongly support Israel's right of self defense and to take such actions as are necessary to secure their homeland as much as we take actions to secure ours.

Question: Do you think it increases or decreases U.S. credibility around the world when U.S. government officials can't even acknowledge that Israel has a massive nuclear arsenal?

Pence: The American people support Israel. I call Israel our most cherished ally and I will continue to stand – without apology – for a strong U.S.-Israel relationship and strong cooperation with our most cherished ally in a very volatile part of the world.

He was utterly incapable of engaging on the issue of Israel's nuclear arsenal. His passionate attachment to Israel has become a mantra and no inconvenient facts need enter the equation.

Since my questioning of Pence and others U.S. leaders – shown in “[The Absurd U.S. Stance on Israel’s Nukes: A Video Sampling of Denial](#)” – information has come out about gag orders on the subject.

As Grant Smith of the Institute for Research: Middle Eastern Policy [wrote in 2015](#): “Under two known gag orders – punishable by imprisonment – U.S. security-cleared government agency employees and contractors may not disclose that Israel has a nuclear weapons program. GEN-16 is a ‘no-comment’ regulation on ‘classified information in the public domain.’ ‘DOE Classification Bulletin WPN-136 on Foreign Nuclear Capabilities’ forbids stating what 63.9 percent of Americans already know – that Israel has a nuclear arsenal.’”

Thanks to Matt Bradley and Chris Belcher for help with the Washington Stakeout project, which questioning Pence was a part of: [@dcstakeout](#) and on [YouTube](#).

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