PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE New York, NY... January 11, 2013

Contact: Dr. Alex Grobman America-Israel Friendship League 212-213-8630, Ext. 230 Agrobman@aifl.org

---

THE AIFL HAS SENT TO MEMBERS OF THE US SENATE A LETTER EXPRESSING ITS CONCERNS AS THE SENATE CONSIDERS CONFIRMATION OF CHUCK HAGEL AS SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

THE LETTER FOLLOWS:

Dear Senator:

The America-Israel Friendship League (the "AIFL"), a non-political, non-sectarian, 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization wishes to express to you our concerns about the nomination for Secretary of Defense of former Nebraska Senator Chuck Hagel. In short, we are concerned about statements that have been attributed to him as follows:

(i) His opposition to many of the Obama Administration's and European governments' policies with regard to the Middle East, particularly his opposition to the imposition of sanctions on the terrorist regime in Iran for developing nuclear weapons;

(ii) His reported record of hostility to Israel, where he also stated (referring to Palestinian terrorism) on August 27, 1998 "...desperate men do desperate things when you take hope away. And that's where the Palestinians are today.";

(iii) His apparent lack of concern about the terrorist actions and war crimes of the Hamas regime in Gaza, which has led him to advocate as US policy a unilateral engagement of Hamas without regard to the requirements set down by the Quartet;

(iv) His description of the so-called "Israel Lobby" as the "Jewish lobby" which ascribes inaccurately religious affiliation to what has been a strong bi-partisan policy of support for the State of Israel, among Jews and non-Jews, alike. It raises the ugly specter of dual loyalty often made by anti-Semites against Jewish U.S. citizens who are supporters of Israel, as does his assertion that he is a U.S. Senator and not an Israeli Senator when he noted that the "Jewish Lobby" intimidates a lot of people;

(v) It is apparent that the issues of sanctions against Iran and possible military action are in the forefront of United States foreign policy concerns today. Having a Secretary of Defense who expresses so hostile an attitude to the Obama Administration's delineated policies on these two issues causes significant concerns for those of us who support these policies, particularly at a time in which unified support for such policies is absolutely critical. Having a Secretary of Defense who feels at best ambivalent and at worst hostile to stated, mainstream US policy on Iran and Israel is sending the wrong message to supporters of the President as well as to America's adversaries (as witnessed by Iran's statement of support for the nomination.); and

(vi) Finally, we are concerned that if the nominee is confirmed it will weaken the bi-partisan Congressional support for US policy on Israel. For example, on January 6, 2012 Sen. Lindsey Graham.(R-S.C.) in an interview on CNN's "State of the Union" expressed dismay that former Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.) would be nominated for Secretary of Defense. He remarked, "I like Chuck Hagel. He served with distinction in Vietnam as an enlisted man -- two Purple Hearts. But quite frankly Chuck Hagel is out of the mainstream of thinking on most issues regarding foreign policy," said Graham." He concluded, "Hagel would be the 'most antagonistic Secretary of Defense toward the State of Israel in our nation's history." This sentiment is of utmost concern to both Democrats and Republicans alike and we urge that the confirmation ensures that these sentiments are not now the views of Senator Hagel today.

The AIFL hopes that the Senate will use the confirmation process to fully vet the positions of Senator Hagel on the issues set forth above and determine whether these positions ascribed to him are still advocated by him today.

We express our appreciation to the Obama Administration for its political, military and financial support for Israel. We would not want to have that record diminished in any way by the appointment of a Secretary of Defense who has expressed views not fully consistent with the best interests of our country.

For the Executive Committee,

Kenneth J. Bialkin Chairman	Harley Lippman President	Alex Grobman, Ph.D. Executive Director

Members of the Executive Committee

Charlotte K. Frank, Ph. D., Judy Di Pippo, Trudy Caro

Robert Abrams	Ira J. Greenblatt	Harley Lippman
Kenneth J. Bialkin	Peter J. Halasz	Amb. Frederic V. Malek
Doron Cohen	Irwin Hochberg	Howard L. Margulis
Dr. Michael Curtis	Gol Kalev	
June B. Dempsey	Paul M. Kaplan	

_____

About America-Israel Friendship League

The America-Israel Friendship League is dedicated to promoting and strengthening the relationship between the people of the United States and the people of Israel.