



**No Harsh Words for Israeli Navy
Congressman Barney Frank
Wednesday, June 02, 2010**

The article in today's Boston Herald is inaccurate in saying that I "had harsh words yesterday for the Israeli Navy." The harsh words I spoke were specifically aimed at some non-governmental settlers in the West Bank who I believe have treated Arabs very badly, and, it should be noted, in contradiction to official Israeli government policy. But I had nothing critical to say about the Israeli Navy. Indeed, I noted that I was not familiar with the specifics of the incident, and I talked about the U.S. experience in Afghanistan as an example of the difficult problems that occur when military organizations are required to use force.

I did say that I thought it was important in the interest of Israel and others that there be a credible inquiry into this, but I believe this inquiry should be conducted by a credible group commissioned by the Israeli government. The record of the United Nations with regard to Israel is a badly biased one and clearly no inquiry chartered by the U.N. would have the credibility that it ought to have.

My reference to "innocent people" was a reference to the problems the American military has encountered in Afghanistan – and before that to a great extent Iraq. As to the situation involving the Israeli Navy and those who were seeking to land in Gaza to aid and support Hamas, I noted that I did not know the specifics. I do believe that the decision to seek to land that group of ships in the territory that is controlled by a terrorist group was a wholly irresponsible one, and created the situation in which violence occurred. I have since learned more about the incident and I note the Israeli report that violent force in fact initiated by those whose boat was boarded – entirely appropriately in my judgment – by the Israeli Navy. The Israeli government has committed itself to appointing a credible inquiry and I support that. While governments investigating themselves are always faced with some skepticism, I believe that the Israeli government has a better record of legitimate self-criticism than almost any other government in the world in this regard, and the Israeli Supreme Court in particular has shown independence unmatched by any other judiciary in dealing with security actions taken against hostile forces.

Further, I want to emphasize again that my reference to actions that I am ashamed of is a reference to non-official actions by some settlers who have acted inappropriately and sometimes violently against Arabs. I continue to believe that the Israeli government should be pushing harder to prevent any new settlements and to remove settlements as part of a genuine two state agreement from those areas of the West Bank not in and around Jerusalem.