GOP Trashes Kerry Speech, Vows Again to Change Tack

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US Republican leadership dismissed on Wednesday Secretary of State John Kerry’s speech on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, vowing a change in policy after President-elect Donald Trump takes office next month.

Speaker of the House Paul Ryan disparaged Kerry’s authority, tweeting that “after allowing this anti-Israel resolution to pass the UN, Secretary Kerry has no credibility to speak on Israeli-Palestinian peace.”

Ryan was referring to Friday’s Security Council vote condemning Israel’s settlements, in which the US abstained.

Kerry spoke for well over an hour on Wednesday, revisiting the stinging critique of Israel’s settlement policy that he delivered during the Brooking Institution’s Saban Forum earlier this month.

Kerry’s Wednesday speech also included criticism of Palestinian incitement and terrorism, and a defense of the administration’s Security Council abstention, before presenting six guidelines for a future peace agreement between the two sides.

Miami Senator Marco Rubio said that Kerry had “decided to cater to the demands of freedom’s enemies and devote and entire speech to disparaging a country that is one of our closest allies.”

“I look forward to working with President-elect Donald Trump and his incoming team to restore our relationship with Israel to its proper place,” Rubio said in a statement.

Republican Jewish Coalition Executive Director Matt Brooks accused the administration of “playing the Jewish community for fools.”

 “By claiming this speech is a framework for peace in the Middle East, President Obama and John Kerry are playing the Jewish community for fools,” Brooks after the speech.

“Their recent actions at the United Nations did nothing more than allow President Obama to take a parting shot at Israel and Prime Minister Netanyahu, while at the same time creating new roadblocks to peace. True peace in the region cannot be achieved by isolating Israel in the international community, but rather can only be achieved through direct negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians.”

Brooks said that his organization was “confident that President Trump and the Republican Congress will work quickly to reverse these statements and actions, and reestablish the strong bonds between the US and Israel.”

Trump himself had disparaged Kerry’s speech before the secretary took the podium in Foggy Bottom, reiterating, in a series of tweets, his commitment to change policy one he takes office.

“We cannot continue to let Israel be treated with such total disdain and disrespect. They used to have a great friend in the US, but not anymore. The beginning of the end was the horrible Iran deal, and now this (U.N.)!” the president-elect posted.

Democratic congressional leaders, including incoming Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, who vocally opposed the Security Council abstention, did not immediately offer any response to Kerry’s speech.