

Heard on the Hill

President requests \$2.4 billion in aid for Israel. President Bush requested \$2.4 billion in military aid to Israel as part of this year's budget request to Congress. The proposed aid for Israel represents the last year of a 10-year U.S.-Israel plan to phase out economic aid to Israel while gradually raising the amount of military aid. The budget request also includes \$40 million to help Israel absorb refugees.

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House bill seeks to bolster U.S.-Israel homeland security cooperation. House lawmakers introduced legislation that would foster cooperation between U.S. and Israeli entities engaged in developing homeland security technologies. The bill, introduced by House Homeland Security Committee Chairman BENNIE THOMPSON (D-MS) and Ranking Member PETER KING (R-NY), would set up an office of international cooperation within the Homeland Security Department to foster joint public and private projects between the United States and its allies, including Israel.

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Rice refutes 'linkage' between Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Iraq. Testifying before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice rejected the idea that solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the key to resolving other disputes in the Middle East. In her House testimony and in remarks before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Rice also highlighted Iran's role as the leading state sponsor of terrorism, specifically its backing of Hizballah.

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Lawmakers condemn Hizballah for using "human shields." House lawmakers introduced a resolution reproaching the terrorist army Hizballah for using civilians as "human shields" during its war against Israel last summer. The resolution, sponsored by Reps. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN (R-FL), RON KLEIN (D-FL), MIKE PENCE (R-IN) and BRAD SHERMAN (D-CA), criticizes such behavior for violating international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Convention. •NER•

INSIDE

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Israel's Internal Security Minister

Special Report:
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NEAR EAST

Report

FEBRUARY 19, 2007

**AIPAC'S BIWEEKLY ON AMERICAN
MIDDLE EAST POLICY**

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Abbas' Choice

While hailed by some as a move toward Israeli-Palestinian peace, the unity government agreement between Hamas and Fatah raises serious questions about Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' sincerity and his credibility as a partner for peace with Israel.

After signing the agreement in Mecca, Hamas leaders unambiguously declared that the deal does not include renunciation of violence or recognition of Israel, as the international community has demanded.

"We devote ourselves to the battle for Jerusalem and the Aqsa Mosque... in order to recover our rights and enable the refugees to return to their homes," said Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal. "What happened in Mecca does not include recognition of Israel," gloated Ahmad Yusuf, advisor to Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh.

Nor does the Mecca deal include acceptance of past agreements, the international community's third demand. Abbas' letter to Haniyeh merely called on Hamas to "respect" previous agreements, which Hamas spokesman Ismail Radwan said "does not mean recognizing the legitimacy of the Zionist entity." ...see *Editor's Comments cont'd on pg. 12*

With Flying Colors

**THE U.S.-ISRAEL ARROW MISSILE
DEFENSE SYSTEM PASSES ITS 15TH TEST**

Israel for the first time successfully conducted a nighttime test of its Arrow missile defense system, marking a key milestone for the centerpiece of the U.S.-Israel strategic relationship.

The Feb. 11 test came as Israel faces a growing array of strategic challenges. Syria recently test-fired an advanced model of its Scud missile, which is capable of striking anywhere in Israel. Meanwhile, nuclear-minded Iran is in the process of further upgrading Shihab-3 missiles that can already hit Israel.

The Arrow supplies a potent response to such threats. As the only operational system that has consistently proven that one missile can shoot down another at high altitudes and speeds, the Arrow program has the ability to shield the Jewish state from incoming ballistic missiles, which in the future may carry nuclear warheads.



Photos by the Associated Press

The jointly developed Arrow missile defense system is the centerpiece of U.S.-Israel strategic cooperation.

...see *With Flying Colors cont'd on pg. 12*

"The Arrow answers all of the relevant threats to the state of Israel," Brig. Gen. Danny Milo, commander of the Israeli Air Force's Anti-Aircraft Division, told *The Jerusalem Post*. He also noted that the test took the Arrow "farther than ever before" and expanded its capabilities and "defensive envelope."

This most recent test—the 15th conducted by Israel—is especially notable because it demonstrates the Arrow's ability to adapt to varying climactic conditions.

The Arrow system has constituted a cornerstone of U.S.-Israel defense

A Passage to India

ON A RECENT VISIT TO INDIA, A SENIOR AIPAC LOBBYIST EXPLORED THE FACTORS THAT MAKE THE WORLD'S LARGEST DEMOCRACY A NATURAL AND VALUABLE ALLY FOR BOTH THE UNITED STATES AND ISRAEL

The security measures at Number 7 Race Course Road in New Delhi are reminiscent of Jerusalem. Passports are carefully examined; cellphones, Blackberries and cameras are left behind; guards carefully check each individual visitor for weapons. As in Israel, special precautions are taken to ensure the protection of the Prime Minister at his official residence. India's history of political assassinations and terrorism necessitate such measures.

It is in part because of the shared threat of terrorism that the meeting with Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh is about to take place. The AIPAC Board of Directors has journeyed here to meet with India's national leaders to discuss ways the United States, Israel and India can work more closely together to confront the gravest dangers in today's world: the proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical arms and terrorism motivated by religious extremism.

The final meeting of our six-day visit to this unique country is with the Prime Minister. We have already visited the Jewish community in Mumbai; toured some of India's key historic sites, such as the Taj Mahal; and met with numerous business leaders, government officials and Members of Parliament. A few hours earlier, we visited the spot at India's Parliament building where Pakistani-supported terrorists killed nine people in December 2001.

As Prime Minister Singh enters and greets us each individually, I am struck by the poignancy of the moment. The leader of this country of 1.1 billion people has once again carved out time to have a meaningful conversation on the critical issues of the day with leaders of America's pro-Israel community. I remember a previous meeting with Prime Minister Singh in New York when he averred that he knew of no other group in history that has played such a prominent role in the development of civilization as the Jewish people.

In the rough-and-tumble world of politics in the world's largest democracy, Singh presents himself as a humble and dignified

man. He is a Sikh leading a nation of some 885 million Hindus and 145 million Muslims. With a Ph.D. in economics, he has devised and implemented sweeping market-oriented reforms. His ascendancy to this powerful position was almost accidental. After his political party won a surprise victory in the May 2004 elections, Congress Party leader Sonja Gandhi deferred to her second-in-command, and Dr. Manmohan Singh became India's 13th Prime Minister.

In our meeting with Prime Minister Singh, we praise him for expanding India's cooperation with the United States, encour-



Photo courtesy of AIPAC

Members of AIPAC's Board of Directors and professional staff pose before the Taj Mahal in India. The AIPAC delegation met with top Indian officials during a six-day visit that explored the growing relationship between India and Israel.

age him to raise the profile of his country's relationship with Israel and urge a more assertive stand towards Iran. Prime Minister Singh speaks with quiet confidence in describing New Delhi's new partnership with Washington. He talks about the great value he places on India's growing ties with Israel, particularly in the areas of defense, agricultural and economic cooperation. He emphasizes that Iran is obliged to meet international nuclear commitments but that he hopes that dialogue and diplomacy facilitated by the United Nations will lead to a solution.

India has made a clear choice to form a strategic partnership with the United States. In addition to the recent civil nuclear agreement, there are many other areas of increasing cooperation, including military exercises, shared intelligence, joint efforts in Afghanistan, agriculture, space and educa-

tion. Prime Minister Singh and his government have expended enormous political capital on developing this relationship.

Regarding Indo-Israeli relations, the two countries will mark the 15th anniversary of full diplomatic ties in the week after our visit. India sees Israel as a country with similar values that faces the common threat of jihadist terrorism. India is becoming increasingly reliant on Israeli weapons and other military technology (\$1.5 billion in imports from Israel in 2006). Civilian trade between the two countries also continues to rise at a fast clip (\$2.5 billion in 2006) and is expected to double. India is using Israeli technology and methodologies to patrol its borders and seas.

While the tangibles of defense and economic cooperation are on the rise, there are still areas of concern. The current government, dependent on the votes of a large Muslim voting bloc and the communist party, prefers a lower profile in its relations with Israel, and India continues to vote against Israel at the United Nations. Regarding the Iranian nuclear threat, India's two votes against Iran at the International Atomic Energy Agency in 2005 and 2006 were extremely important and marked a historic change in India's approach. Yet India could probably use its special relationship with Iran more nimbly and actively to change Iranian policies that New Delhi opposes.

In spite of some areas of difference, however, it is important to focus on the trend lines in India's expanding bonds with both the United States and Israel. Our experience in India confirms that there are overlapping values and interests that have created new opportunities and relationships. India's role in world affairs and the international economy is on the rise, and finding new areas of cooperation will become increasingly important for all three countries.—Jeff Colman

AIPAC Deputy Director of Policy and Government Affairs Jeff Colman oversees the organization's efforts to strengthen ties between the United States, India and Israel.

NER INTERVIEWS

AVI DICHTER, ISRAELI MINISTER OF INTERNAL SECURITY

Israeli Internal Security Minister Avi Dichter recently concluded an agreement on U.S.-Israel homeland security cooperation with U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff. Following the signing ceremony, he granted an exclusive interview to Near East Report about the agreement's significance. Excerpts of the interview follow.



Photo by Reuters

Israeli Internal Security Minister Avi Dichter signed a deal to expand U.S.-Israel homeland security ties.

Near East Report: What is the significance of the agreement on homeland security cooperation that you concluded with Secretary Chertoff?

Avi Dichter: The agreement has been in the works for almost two years, and its conclusion was a breakthrough, a landmark in the history of the U.S.-Israel relationship. Simply put, we have formalized U.S.-Israel homeland security cooperation.

In the past, homeland security cooperation between our two nations was largely confined to ad hoc relationships between agencies here in America and their counterparts in Israel.

With the memorandum of understanding that Secretary Chertoff and I signed, we've decided to unite all of those efforts under the umbrella of the Internal Security Ministry in Israel and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in the United States. This doesn't mean that the working relationships between individual agencies will cease. On the contrary, we think that our agreement will enhance cooperation.

The memorandum sets up a joint U.S.-Israel steering committee whose members will coordinate, integrate and synchronize collaboration with the DHS.

The committee's working groups will focus on topics including aviation security, information-sharing and training, technology developments focusing on the fight against terrorism and emergency/disaster preparedness.

It will also be looking for additional areas within the realm of homeland security that the United States and Israel can work on together. Secretary Chertoff is probably going to pay a visit to Israel in the coming months, and we are going to continue developing the relationship that we formally established here in Washington.

NER: How advanced is the U.S.-Israel homeland security relationship currently?

AD: We are certainly not starting from scratch. The United States and Israel have been sharing knowledge about how to protect airports from terrorist attacks, about how to identify potential terrorists in line before they board planes, about screening cargo for explosives and other deadly material. We've also shared various technology designed to thwart attacks.

In addition, I know that we have hosted individual groups of American state homeland security officials, police, firemen and other first responders who want to study how their counterparts in our country guard against terrorist attacks and cope with their aftermath.

All of these activities will undoubtedly continue. It's just that our overall relationship will be much better coordinated and much better organized under the new memorandum.

NER: Why is Israel so uniquely suited to partner with the United States in our attempts to prevent terrorist attacks here?

AD: Because of the constant threat that we face from Palestinian and other terrorist

groups, Israelis have tragically been forced to become experts in homeland security.

In the United States, you are an island. You are relatively isolated from countries that sponsor international terrorism. In Israel, our situation is different. Our threats are just across the street, behind a window and in our back-

A RECENT AGREEMENT TO EXPAND U.S.-ISRAEL HOMELAND SECURITY TIES WAS "A BREAKTHROUGH, A LANDMARK IN THE HISTORY OF THE U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP."

yard. We have had to devise a different system of organizing our intelligence, and to shorten the lines between the intelligence and the troops who have to foil terrorist threats. If you are not fast enough, you simply find yourself too late to stop an attack.

The Israeli experience of dealing with terrorism is something that should be shared with countries throughout the world. Whether it's knowing signs that can help detect would-be suicide bombers or whether it's securing areas in which there has been a terrorist attack, these are protective measures that can help other countries reduce the threat of terrorism.

NER: Has Israel shared its security expertise with countries other than the United States?

AD: Yes. Before meeting Secretary Chertoff in Washington, I was in Canada to meet with members of that country's parliament.

We are working with some countries in Europe. There are also a lot of delegations coming to Israel from non-Western countries, even from the former Soviet Union, even from Asia.

After 9/11, the world has realized that it must work together to fight terrorism. Israel is saying to the world, "Let us work with you to help do this." •NER•

Given these statements, Abbas must ensure that any new Palestinian unity government meet the international requirements. If that government does not unequivocally renounce terror, recognize Israel and accept prior agreements, there should be serious implications for U.S. relations with Abbas. While the United States must continue to promote Israeli-Palestinian peace, its efforts must be guided by the fundamental principles underlying President Bush's vision of a two-state solution.

Until the direction of this new Palestinian government is clarified, members of Congress should continue to raise concerns about U.S. funds intended to help Abbas.

Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY), chairwoman of the House Appropriations Committee's Foreign Operations subcommittee, has placed a hold on \$86 million slated to help Gen. Keith Dayton's efforts to train Abbas' security forces to confront Hamas, pending more answers from the State Department on the matter.

"It is imperative that we have a fuller understanding of exactly what the funding is for and what the situation is on the ground," Lowey said, adding that the "Mecca agreement raised additional questions."

Indeed. Since the funds are allocated for training Abbas' security forces to confront Hamas terrorists and provide security, as long as Abbas is cooperating with the terrorist group, why should we provide aid to his forces? •NER•

In Memoriam: Father Robert Drinan

FORMER CONGRESSMAN AND CATHOLIC PRIEST FOUGHT FOR ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST AND SOVIET JEWS' FREEDOM TO EMIGRATE TO THEIR ANCESTRAL HOME

The recent passing of Father Robert Drinan marked a loss for the Democratic Party, the Roman Catholic Church and the U.S. pro-Israel movement.

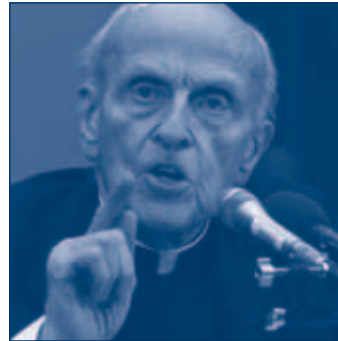


Photo by Reuters
Father Robert Drinan was a congressional champion of Israel.

Highlighting the principles shared by all three groups was one of the many feats performed by Drinan, a Jesuit priest who won election to the House of Representatives from Massachusetts in 1970 in a campaign managed by a young anti-war Vietnam veteran named John Kerry.

Drinan's progressive Catholic outlook found expression in his vigorous support for Israel, which he first visited in 1963 and always viewed as a beacon of freedom, justice and tolerance. Drinan collected his thoughts on the subject in a 1977 book called *Honor the Promise: America's Commitment to Israel*.

As a co-founder of the National Interreligious Task Force on Soviet Jewry, Drinan also stood up for the rights of Jews denied the right to emigrate to the state of Israel. Underscoring the Helsinki Accords' demand for all nations to respect basic freedoms, he publicized the plight of Prisoners of Zion.

"A year ago at the conclusion of your trial you prayed, 'Next Year in Jerusalem,'" Drinan wrote in an open letter to Natan Sharansky during Sharansky's imprisonment in the Soviet Gulag. "Please continue to pray until you are answered."

Drinan died in Washington at the age of 86, having lived long enough to see Sharansky and hundreds of thousands of other Soviet Jews win the freedom to go to their ancestral homeland. •NER•

With Flying Colors....cont'd from pg. 9

cooperation for more than a decade. The joint program, which grew from the experiences during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, has brought significant benefits to America as well, which has incorporated many of its technologies into other U.S. missile defense programs.

Also, nearly half of each Arrow missile's constituent parts are manufactured in the

United States, bringing millions of dollars to the U.S. economy.

"We can't ignore the environment we live in and what we hear about threats towards Israel," Yossi Weiss, manager of the Space Division at Israel Aerospace Industries, told the Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth*. "Today [citizens] can know that they can sleep at night and be sure the defense establishment can protect them." •NER•

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