

The U.S.–Israel Strategic Partnership

“It is vital that the United States and Israel continue to work closely to combat the common enemies and threats that face both nations.”

—Sen. Jon Kyl (R-AZ)



Army Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum, left, chief of the U.S. National Guard Bureau, meets with an Israeli soldier after observing counterterrorism training exercises in Israel.

For decades, the United States and Israel have shared a deep strategic relationship aimed at confronting the common threats to both nations. During the Cold War, the United States and Israel formed a bulwark against the spread of Communism. Today, in the post-9/11 world, the United States and Israel are working more closely together than ever before to defeat the common threats of Islamic radicalism and terrorism.

Training Together for Common Challenges

The close strategic relationship between the United States and Israel originated with the allies sharing key intelligence with one another around the time of the 1967 Six-Day War. This partnership was later broadened and formalized when President Ronald Reagan and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir announced the establishment of the Joint Political Military Group to coordinate planning against threats faced by both nations in the Middle East. Later in the decade, Israel was formally designated as a major non-NATO ally of the United States.

Today, the United States prepositions military equipment such as ammunition and armor

in Israel, and the two allies engage in joint military exercises involving American and Israeli land, sea and air forces. Twice annually, U.S. Marines conduct desert warfare training with their Israel Defense Forces (IDF) counterparts, and American soldiers and security officials have received Israeli instruction on urban combat techniques. U.S. pilots hold mock dogfights with the Israeli Air Force and have tested aerial combat tactics and practiced refueling.

Research-and-development collaboration between the United States and Israel has produced innovative technologies and security techniques that are now protecting American and Israeli lives.

Jointly Producing Military Innovations

The close partnership between the United States and Israel has yielded leading military technologies such as the Arrow, a missile defense system that is currently deployed in Israel. Jointly developed by the two allies, the Arrow is among the world's most sophisticated missile shields. It is the only operational system that has consistently proven that one missile can shoot down another at high altitudes and speeds.

Strategic cooperation has also made important Israeli military innovations available to the United States, which is currently putting these systems to use in the Middle East. The American military routinely deploys Israeli-developed unmanned aerial vehicles, which have logged thousands of hours in Iraq and Afghanistan.

U.S. planes in both countries have been equipped with Litening, an Israeli-origin system with infrared sensors that identify ground targets and enable pilots to fly at night and in bad weather. The Litening targeting pod made it possible for American fighter pilots to deliver the munitions that eliminated al-Qaeda's leader in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Israeli-developed reactive armor tiles, which explode outward upon impact, have been used to protect American armored personnel carriers, so far saving more than 800 U.S. servicemen from potential death or injury in Iraq. America and Israel have also cooperated on ways to reduce the threat posed by improvised explosive devices, which have been responsible for the majority of American casualties in Iraq.

ISRAELI TECHNOLOGIES AND TECHNIQUES HAVE SAVED AMERICAN LIVES IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN



Bradley Reactive Armor Tiles

Roughly 800 U.S. soldiers have been saved by the Israeli-developed armor plating that explodes outward, diffusing the impact of incoming fire.



Litening Pod

Israeli-developed and American-produced, this sophisticated system has revolutionized the targeting and navigation capabilities of American aircraft.



The Emergency Bandage

Used widely in Iraq, this state-of-the-art Israeli bandage enables medics to dress a wound while simultaneously stemming bleeding.



Hunter UAV

The Israeli-developed drone has been used daily by U.S. commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan to gather critical intelligence.



Urban Combat Training

U.S. troops operating in the Middle East have benefitted from Israeli urban combat training techniques.

Fighting Terrorism and Defending the Homeland

Since 9/11, the United States and Israel have intensified their homeland security cooperation. Israel shares priceless information about terrorist organizations with the United States and is one of five countries participating in the U.S. Counterterrorism Technical Support Working Group, whose experts collaborate to develop technologies and equipment aimed at thwarting terrorism and safeguarding citizens.

American law enforcement agencies are increasingly studying Israel's battle against terrorism to glean lessons for U.S. efforts to protect its citizens.

Israel frequently hosts delegations of American police chiefs, sheriffs and emergency responders. These U.S. lawmen have returned to infuse their departments' training with lessons on how Israeli security forces prevent terrorist attacks such as suicide bombings.

Sustaining and Expanding U.S.–Israel Cooperation

In 2007, the United States and Israel signed a Memorandum of Understanding that formalized cooperation on homeland security. Meanwhile, Congress is working on legislation that

would set up an office in the Department of Homeland Security devoted to fostering cooperation with American allies such as Israel.

Recognizing Israel's unique role as a strategic asset and the common threats both nations face, policymakers from universities and state governments to the military and the Department of Homeland Security should identify ways to harness the expertise that Israel can provide to the United States and promote the synergy generated by the two allies.

Such cooperation will ensure that the United States and Israel, working together, are prepared to combat and defend against those who seek to harm both nations.

“Israel created a model for security that the United States can learn a great deal from to protect our citizens.”

—House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Bennie Thompson (D-MS)

Key Points

- In the post-9/11 world, the United States and Israel are working more closely than ever to defeat the common threats of Islamic radicalism and terrorism.
- U.S.–Israel collaboration produces cutting-edge military systems to protect the citizens of both nations.
- The Arrow, a ballistic missile defense system, was jointly developed by the United States and Israel and is the centerpiece of strategic cooperation between the allies.
- Israel serves as an American ally in the Middle East and enables the U.S. to pre-position vital military equipment that can be used by both nations in a time of crisis.
- The American and Israeli armed forces routinely take part in joint training exercises and military and counterterrorism planning.
- Forced to become the world's foremost expert on fighting terrorism because of ongoing attacks on its citizens, Israel has shared its homeland-security expertise with the United States.