

# MEMMO

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## Boost in U.S. Aid to Israel Vital Amid Increasing Threats

**The administration's request for \$2.55 billion in security assistance for Israel in 2009 represents the first year of a 10-year U.S.-Israel security agreement to help the Jewish state face increasing threats. Iran is continuing its uranium enrichment efforts in defiance of the international community, while Syria, Hizballah and Hamas are amassing arms at an unprecedented rate. U.S. assistance has long played an indispensable role in ensuring that Israel maintains its qualitative military edge over potential adversaries.**

The administration's request for increased assistance to Israel represents an important expression of America's commitment to Israel's security.

- The administration requested \$2.55 billion in security assistance for Israel as part of its fiscal year 2009 budget submission to Congress.
- The plan to help meet Israel's defense needs is a vital component of the longstanding U.S. commitment to maintain Israel's qualitative military edge in a dynamic and increasingly challenging regional environment.
- This request represents the first year of a new 10-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) reached last year by the United States and Israel. Subject to congressional approval, the plan pledges \$30 billion in security assistance to Israel over the next decade.
- Under the agreement, Israel is slated to receive gradual increases in aid over the next four years—before leveling off at \$3.1 billion for the remaining six years.
- The agreement, signed last August, comes as the first 10-year MOU, signed by President Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in 1998, concludes at the end of fiscal year 2008.
- Enacted during the height of the Oslo peace process and before the extent of the Iranian nuclear program was known, the original plan phased out economic aid to Israel while gradually increasing military aid.



**A nuclear-armed Iran with ballistic missiles would pose a grave threat to U.S. forces in the region and Israel.**

U.S. support for a strong and secure Israel is central to peace efforts and American interests in the region.

- In signing the MOU, then-Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns stressed that the agreement represents a vital U.S. “investment in peace” and that “a secure and strong Israel is in the interests of the United States.”
- Both countries have long recognized that their mutual interests in deterring war, promoting stability and eventually achieving peace are only possible if the United States continues to ensure Israel’s qualitative military edge over its potential adversaries.
- The chances of peace are enhanced when Israel is strong because its potential adversaries know that they cannot destroy it militarily.

Israel faces greater threats today than it did a decade ago.

- Iran—whose leadership calls for Israel’s destruction—has made significant progress in its ability to enrich uranium, the critical component for nuclear weapons. The regime can also deploy a sizable force of increasingly sophisticated Shihab missiles, with ranges that now extend far beyond Israel.
- In 1998, when the last 10-year aid plan was signed, Israel was negotiating agreements with a unified Palestinian Authority under Yasir Arafat. Today, the terrorist group Hamas has full control over Gaza and is actively imposing its violent, radical Islamist agenda throughout the territory while launching daily rocket attacks against Israeli civilians.
- Ten years ago, Israel controlled a security zone in southern Lebanon to deter Hizballah attacks against its citizens. Today, Iran and Syria have helped Hizballah replenish its stockpile of rockets to levels that are now three times its inventory before the 2006 war—some 40,000, according to Israeli security officials.
- The Syrian military has embarked on a modernization effort and arms-buying spree not seen since the 1980s. Russia—now funding its long-moribund weapons R&D efforts with windfall oil profits—is offering a wide range of new technologies to Syria. Damascus has also amassed an arsenal of long-range missiles and short-range rockets that dwarfs Hizballah’s own stockpile.

Spiraling defense costs require increased aid to enable Israel to maintain its qualitative military edge over Iran and hostile Arab states.

- Despite a strong economy, Israel is forced to spend proportionately greater sums of money on defense than any country in the industrialized world. Israel is expected to spend eight percent of its GDP on defense this year, or 17 percent of its entire budget.
- Overall regional military spending has accelerated throughout the Middle East, and the rate will continue to increase as oil revenues are spent on new arms imports. From 2002 to 2006, the growth rate of Saudi Arabia’s military budget was almost six times that of Israel’s, while Iran’s rate of military spending grew 16 times more than the Jewish state’s.
- Advanced weapons systems needed to counter the growing threats are more expensive today. The new U.S. F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, which Israel is seeking to buy to maintain its air superiority, is projected to cost close to \$100 million per plane, double the cost of earlier model fighter jets.