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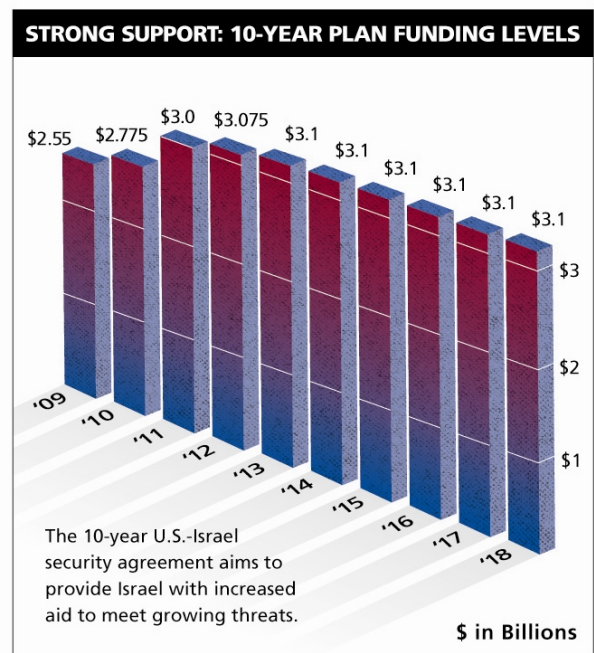
March 9, 2011

Meeting U.S. Commitment to Israel's Security Is Essential

Given the continuing turmoil in the Middle East, the United States must keep its commitment to Israel's security by fully funding pledged aid for fiscal years 2011 and 2012. Dramatic events in the Middle East underscore both the fragility of Israel's security situation and Israel's importance as the region's sole stable, pro-Western democracy.

The U.S.-Israel agreement to provide aid to the Jewish state will help Israel face increased threats.

- In 2007, President George W. Bush signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Israel that pledged \$30 billion in U.S. security assistance to Israel over a 10-year period.
- In fulfillment of this pledge, President Obama is asking Congress to appropriate \$3 billion in security assistance in fiscal year 2011 and \$3.075 in fiscal year 2012.
- The 10-year agreement embodies America's commitment to maintain Israel's qualitative military edge (QME), which Congress has defined as Israel's "ability to counter and defeat any credible conventional military threat from any individual state or possible coalition of states or from non-state actors."
- Congress has yet to complete action on Israel's fiscal year funding allocation of \$3 billion, a \$225 million increase from the previous year.



Israel is facing increasing costs as it confronts expanding threats in the region.

- The 10-year agreement helps Israel meet the growing challenges of a potential nuclear Iran, Hamas rocket attacks from Gaza against Israeli civilians, and a resurgent Hizballah in Lebanon armed with more than 55,000 rockets and missiles.
- For three decades, Egypt under Hosni Mubarak adhered to the 1979 peace treaty and quietly cooperated with Israel on vital strategic issues. With Egypt at peace, there was no constellation of Arab military forces that could threaten Israel's existence, enabling Israel to reduce its defense budget from nearly 30 percent of its GNP in 1974 to less than 10 percent today.
- Given the size and sophisticated weaponry of the Egyptian army, a more hostile Egyptian policy toward Israel would require a major—and expensive—upgrade in Israel's defense posture.

- Even before the regional upheaval, Israel had committed to a 10-year plan of sustained increases in its own defense spending in addition to the expected growth in U.S. aid. During the next decade, Israel is slated to spend \$150 billion on defense, a 50 percent increase over the previous 10-year period.
- The military hardware—including American-built advanced fighter aircraft and naval vessels—that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) must acquire over the next decade to maintain its QME is far more sophisticated, complex and expensive than previous American equipment.
- As a result, Israel must spend more on defense as a percentage of gross domestic product than any other nation in the industrialized world. Israel allocates 7 percent of its GDP to defense, or nearly double the percentage that the United States spends.
- In the meantime, overall military spending throughout the region is accelerating, fueled by windfall oil profits. From 2002 to 2006, the growth rate of Saudi Arabia's military budget was almost 6 times that of Israel's, while Iran's rate of military spending grew 16 times more than Israel's.

U.S. funding to Israel sends a message to the Jewish state and potential adversaries about America's unbreakable commitment to Israel's security.

- By keeping its funding commitment to Israel in both 2011 and 2012, the United States will send a strong message of tangible support to Israel at a highly volatile time.
- While other non-democratic countries in the Middle East wrestle with change and instability, the United States can count on Israel as a trusted, reliable and democratic ally. And Israel needs to be able to count on the United States to live up to its commitments.
- Conversely, Israel's would-be adversaries—whether in Iran, Syria, Hizballah, Hamas or elsewhere—will understand that America's commitment to Israel is unbreakable.

Security assistance to Israel provides tangible benefits to the United States.

- For decades, U.S. support for Israel through annual security aid has helped the United States achieve critical goals in the Middle East.
- U.S. aid has helped deter a major regional war by making clear to potential foes that they could not defeat Israel militarily. This is the logic behind the commitment to preserving Israel's QME.
- For the United States, Israel has served as an anchor of stability in the region, helping thwart aggressors and preserve moderate regimes without the type of deployment of U.S. forces required in Europe or East Asia.
- By helping the Jewish state maintain its military edge, American assistance has also promoted peace with Egypt and Jordan. With the backing of the United States, Israel felt secure enough to make dramatic concessions in peace agreements with these countries as well make far-reaching offers to the Palestinians and Syria.
- Israel has also served as a U.S. laboratory for new weapons and technology. Israeli battlefield use of American equipment and shared know-how has helped the United States improve both its equipment and tactics, especially while fighting two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Aid to Israel also boosts industry here at home. Israel is required to spend 74 percent of U.S. aid in the United States, which helps create American jobs.