

## Chapter 3

# The U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership



The United States and Israel have developed a deep strategic relationship to confront common threats and ensure Israel's security. A key pillar of America's Middle East security framework, U.S.-Israeli strategic ties are constantly growing and expanding into new arenas.

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## Key Points

- *Qualitative Military Edge (QME)*: The United States is committed to enhancing Israel's QME to ensure its ally can confront any threat or combination of threats it might face.
- *A Strong Deterrent*: Israel's military strength and central geostrategic location provide a strong deterrent to regional actors opposed to the United States.
- *Common Threats*: America and Israel face numerous shared challenges, including terrorism, proliferation, counterfeiting, cyber warfare and the spread of radical Islamist ideology.
- *Mutual Benefits*: Both nations gain from a strong strategic partnership that draws upon Israel's leadership in designing advanced military, homeland security, counterterrorism and cyber protection technologies that it shares with the United States.
- *A Beacon of Stability*: As the Middle East is swept by the most dramatic upheavals in decades, Israel's stable democracy and reliable pro-U.S. orientation remain unquestioned and assured.

## **The Important Role That Congress Can Play**

In light of the two nations' shared values and common interests, members of Congress must ensure Israel has the capabilities it needs to defend itself.

On Dec. 3, 2014, Congress finalized the passage of the United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014 – a landmark piece of legislation that dramatically enhances America's relationship with the state of Israel. By declaring in legislation that Israel is a "major strategic partner" of the United States, the new law lays the foundation for expanded U.S.-Israeli cooperation in a wide variety of spheres, including defense, intelligence, homeland security, cyber security, energy, water, agriculture and alternative fuel technologies.

### **Congress should:**

- Work to implement the Strategic Partnership Act by developing additional opportunities to expand the burgeoning U.S.-Israel strategic relationship in mutually beneficial ways, such as through cooperative missile defense and homeland security programs.
  - Continue to support security assistance to Israel, appropriating \$3.1 billion annually, as stipulated in a 10-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the countries signed in 2007.
  - Enhance Israel's QME and scrutinize the QME impact of advanced U.S. arms sales to the region.
  - Continue strong funding levels for missile and rocket defense programs, including Arrow-3, David's Sling and Iron Dome.
  - Expand cooperation in new and emerging fields such as energy and cybersecurity.
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## **Close Strategic Partnership Spans Decades**

The close strategic relationship between the United States and Israel originated with the allies sharing key intelligence around the time of the 1967 Six-Day War. American-Israeli cooperation ranges from frequent high-level strategic dialogues among senior political and military leaders, to combined military planning and exercises, intelligence-sharing and technological development. Such collaboration plays a critical role in stemming extremism in the region.

## **Security Assistance Helps Ensure Israel's QME**

The United States and Israel share mutual interests in deterring war, promoting stability and creating lasting peace. These goals are only achievable if the U.S. continues to help ensure Israel's QME over its neighbors. In the 40-plus years since the 1973 Yom Kippur War, U.S. annual security aid for Israel has helped prevent conflict by letting potential foes know that they cannot defeat the Jewish state militarily.

## **Shared Challenges**

The United States and Israel face many of the same threats, including the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the growth of state-sponsored terrorism and the spread of Islamist radicalism. The two countries set up a complex and cost-effective network of strategic cooperation programs to contend with these dangers, which include sharing cutting-edge technology and valuable intelligence, conducting combined military exercises and researching and developing new defense systems. The United States has also pre-positioned weapons stockpiles in Israel for use in the event that the United States or Israel ever need to respond quickly to conflict in the region.

Following the 2014 conflict between Israel and Hamas, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin Dempsey said Israel went to extraordinary lengths to save civilian lives and sent a U.S. delegation to Israel to study Israel Defense Forces (IDF) methods. Israel

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and the United States share invaluable expertise about urban combat zones and best practices to minimize civilian casualties.

## **Cooperation in Missile Defense Programs**

Through the annual defense appropriations bill, the United States provides funding to jointly develop missile defense programs with Israel. This aid helps Israel defend against rockets and missile threats posed by adversaries ranging from Iran to Hamas.

- *Iron Dome*: Since 2005, terrorists in Gaza have fired more than 12,000 rockets indiscriminately into Israel. The attacks prompted the Jewish state to develop Iron Dome, which can intercept incoming rockets in mid-air. Recognizing the value of this system, the United States appropriated \$351 million to help Israel fund Iron Dome in fiscal year 2015. Additionally, Congress approved \$225 million in emergency supplemental funding for Iron Dome procurement at the height of Israel's 2014 conflict with Hamas.
  - *The Arrow*: 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 supersonic speeds.
  - *David's Sling*: Israel and the U.S. are collaborating on the development of David's Sling, a quick-reaction defense system that addresses the threats posed by short- and medium-range missiles and rockets rapidly spreading throughout the eastern Mediterranean Levant. The system is expected to enter operational service after 2015.
  - *Juniper Cobra*: A centerpiece of the interaction between the U.S. and Israeli militaries has been combined missile defense training, including the biannual Juniper Cobra exercise. In this maneuver, U.S. and Israeli forces practice cooperative tactics to counter the growing threat from ballistic missiles and long-range rockets.
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## **Saving American Lives on the Battlefield**

Israel has developed dramatic new technologies that play a key role in saving U.S. lives during military conflicts.

- **Litening Pod:** Attached to fighter aircraft, the Israeli-developed Litening Pod identifies targets with laser precision from high altitudes, placing the pilot in less danger while reducing collateral damage on the ground.
- **Bradley Reactive Armor Tiles:** Created by the IDF, these tiles overlay a vehicle's armor with embedded explosives that blast outward to suppress incoming fire. The tiles have protected thousands of U.S. troops in armored personnel carriers.
- **Emergency Bandage:** Carried in every soldier's first aid kit, the Israeli bandage stems blood loss, prevents infection and allows non-medically trained soldiers to stabilize the wounded following an attack. The bandage was instrumental in saving the life of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords and several others in the aftermath of a 2011 shooting rampage in Tucson, Arizona.

## **The United States and Israel Strengthen Homeland Security Cooperation**

Since Sept. 11, 2001, the United States and Israel have intensified their homeland security cooperation. U.S. policymakers, law-enforcement officers and first responders have sought to harness Israel's hard-earned technical expertise in the counterterrorism and homeland security arenas.

- **Aviation Security:** In May 2010, Israel signed a MOU with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to share information and techniques on airport security, including the use of behavioral screening.
  - **Border and Port Security:** America uses Israel's vast experience and advanced technologies to help protect U.S. borders. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) operate Israeli-designed unmanned aerial reconnaissance vehicles (UAVs), which have proven an effective force in efforts to stem the flow of illegal immigrants, dangerous narcotics and potential terrorists.
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- *Mall Security*: American security officials recognize and seek Israel's know-how in mall security, explosives technology and behavioral screening.
- *Cybersecurity*: Israel and the United States are two of 15 nations that are working together to reduce the threat of attacks on computer networks. The collaborative efforts of these countries will help ensure that each nation's online infrastructure is secure. In 2008, the United States and Israel also signed an agreement to increase their science and technology cooperation, in an effort to combat a broad range of new global threats.

### **Emerging Fields Offer New Opportunities to Expand the U.S.-Israel Strategic Relationship**

- *Energy*: The United States and Israel are working together in an unprecedented fashion in the energy security and clean technology arenas. The governments, along with their respective business and academic sectors, are partnering to promote new energy solutions to meet long-term goals. This important work helps to reduce dependence on petroleum, encourages the pursuit of sustainable technologies and fosters the development and production of new resources, such as natural gas, to strengthen the energy independence and geopolitical positions of the United States and Israel.
  - *Water*: Israel is a global leader in an array of water management technologies, such as desalination, brackish water treatment, reuse and recycling and drip irrigation. Israel currently recycles upwards of 80 percent of its water resources, setting the global gold standard, and aims to increase that figure to 95 percent by 2020. Just as Israel has shared its groundbreaking drip irrigation methods with arid countries, today its revolutionary desalination and recycling technologies and resource management expertise are exported globally, including to the United States. In March 2014, Israel signed a MOU with California for research and development in a wide spectrum of technological areas, including water conservation. Israel has inked similar agreements with Texas to combat a severe drought that plagues large parts of the western United States. Israel also partnered in West Virginia's efforts to tackle the devastating Elk River chemical spill.
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- *Trade:* The United States and Israel both significantly benefit from their wide-ranging economic and technological partnership. Numerous binational programs allow American companies and universities to enhance collaboration with Israel's leading institutions and businesses. In 1985, Israel became the first country to sign a free trade agreement with the United States. The U.S. stands as Israel's largest single trading partner, while Israel ranks as America's 23rd largest partner. In 2014, the U.S. exported \$13.8 billion worth of goods to Israel, and imported \$21.1 billion from Israel. An increasing number of U.S. states, including Massachusetts, Michigan, California and others have recognized the value of enhanced cooperation with Israel – signing R&D agreements with the Jewish state.
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