



Foundations of Friendship

Eleven minutes after Israel declared its independence, President Harry Truman made the United States the first nation on earth to recognize Israel. In the years following that historic decision, the U.S.-Israel alliance would become the cornerstone of American policy in the Middle East, and Israel would emerge as one of America's greatest strategic assets.

Three years after President Truman recognized Israel, Congress approved the first aid package to Israel—\$65 million to help absorb Holocaust survivors and Jewish refugees from Arab countries. Ten years later, in 1961, President John F. Kennedy lifted the American arms embargo and sold Israel crucial Hawk missiles—the only effective defense against Soviet-made bombers. Kennedy's decision established an important precedent: The United States would act to maintain Israel's qualitative military edge over its potential adversaries.

Following the 1967 Six-Day War, when Israel routed its enemies and captured advanced Soviet weaponry, the strategic relationship deepened. The United States became the chief supplier of weaponry to Israel and began providing significant amounts of foreign aid. During the 1973 Yom Kippur War, President Richard Nixon provided Israel with a massive airlift, helping the Jewish state overcome initial setbacks on the battlefield.

At the end of the 1970s and into the beginning of the 1980s, the United States was faced with an increasingly volatile Middle East. It was during this decade that the danger of radical Islam and terrorism emerged. Due to the growing regional instability, the United States sought a stable regional ally; it found one in Israel. The Jewish state had both the willingness and the necessary infrastructure to provide American troops with a safe base of operations in the event of a crisis.

The United States began to view Israel as a vital strategic partner. The alliance was hardened in 1988 when President Ronald Reagan and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir signed an agreement designating Israel as "a major non-NATO ally of the United States." The memorandum cemented Israel's position as an anchor for U.S. influence in the Middle East.

While the U.S. originally viewed Israel as an asset because of its strategic location in an unstable region, America would also grow to rely on the Jewish state for its many talents. The U.S.-Israel relationship has evolved into a mutually beneficial alliance and the close partnership between the two nations has yielded military technologies, helping to protect American and Israeli lives.

Washington and Jerusalem have come a long way together since Truman first recognized the Jewish state in 1948. Today, the alliance is built to last. In the years ahead, the two nations will continue their joint efforts to counter global threats as they work together to seek peace.