



Israel: America's Partner

Strategy. Safety. Security. These are the principles that define the defense partnership between the United States and Israel. Whether it's phone calls between senior defense officials at the Pentagon and their counterparts in Tel Aviv, instant communication between American and Israeli commanders on duty, or joint training exercises between troops from both countries—not a day goes by without critical American-Israeli engagement.

Military cooperation between the United States and Israel was formalized in 1983 when U.S. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon signed the first formal agreement on strategic cooperation. Similarly, President Ronald Reagan and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir announced the establishment of a “Joint Political Military Group” to establish mechanisms for planning, exercises, and repositioning against threats faced by both nations in the Middle East. Later in the decade, Israel was formally designated by an act of Congress as a major non-NATO ally of the United States.

Today, this partnership yields significant collaboration that helps keep the citizens of both countries safe. 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. Elite U.S. special warfare units regularly train with their IDF counterparts, exchanging valuable tactics that both sides have learned through the course of difficult and costly operations against similar Mideast adversaries.

In addition, Israel and the United States have cooperated on a wide range of intelligence-sharing programs, including work on monitoring Iran, al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups. Israel's hard-earned technical and professional expertise in counter-terrorism and homeland security was made completely available to the United States in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on 9/11.

Moreover, American law-enforcement officers and first responders 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. On their return home, these officials have infused their departments' training with lessons on how Israeli security forces prevent terrorist attacks such as suicide bombings.

While it's well known that the United States plays a vital role in ensuring Israel's security, it's not always widely recognized that Israel helps the United States in many important fields. Indeed, Israel, despite its small size and population, has so much that it can teach us. The Jewish state is not only America's partner—it's a strategic asset that makes the United States stronger and safer.