



A Year of Unprecedented Cooperation

In the face of tremendous turmoil throughout the Middle East, Israel and the United States rely on their military partnership to confront the challenges that this period of uncertainty brings. In fact, this past year saw unparalleled cooperation between the two countries, as they worked together to defeat common threats.

A key achievement of U.S.-Israeli cooperation this year was the deployment of the Iron Dome rocket defense system in southern Israel. Iron Dome batteries—funded in part through U.S. aid—saved the lives of many Israeli civilians by intercepting rockets fired from Gaza. The United States also stands to benefit from this state-of-the-art system, which can be used to protect American troops facing the threat of short-range rockets in the Persian Gulf and South Korea.

Another way in which the United States and Israel closely cooperate is by holding joint training and military exercises. A number of senior U.S. military officials visited Israel this year in an effort to expand these activities.

While visiting the Jewish state in August, Lt.-Gen. Mark Hertling, commander of the U.S. Army in Europe, announced that the two countries will hold a massive ground forces exercise in May 2012. A month later, the U.S. European Command chief was in Israel to discuss military cooperation, including a large-scale joint missile defense drill scheduled for early next year.

The partnership between the United States and Israel extends to the highest levels of both governments. This year President Obama requested an unprecedented \$3.075 billion in security assistance for Israel for fiscal year 2012, and in September it was revealed that he had secretly authorized the sale of deep-penetrating bombs, known as bunker busters, to the Jewish state.

In addition, shortly after taking on his new position, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta visited Israel this past September. Panetta conveyed America's "continuing commitment to Israel's security" after conversations with Israeli leaders, and emphasized the importance of preserving Israel's qualitative military edge over potential threats.

The end of the year is an opportunity to highlight the U.S.-Israel security alliance, which plays a key role in stabilizing the naturally volatile Middle East. As President Obama has said, many of the same forces that threaten Israel also threaten the United States and its efforts to secure peace and stability in the region. With these facts in mind, we should all do what we can to further strengthen the U.S.-Israel relationship in 2012.