



Middle East Spotlight

4th of July: Celebrating Shared Values

As the United States celebrates its national independence, we are reminded of the history and values that shape our country today. Like America, the Jewish state was founded upon an idea, and has evolved into a unique sanctuary of democracy, freedom and pluralism.

While the U.S.-Israel relationship is rooted in shared values, it has expanded to include strategic cooperation on matters of terrorism and defense, and robust economic partnerships that strengthen the economies of both nations.

Amid unprecedented sectarian violence and Iran's pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability, Israel and the United States are working closer than ever to address the increasing dangers along the Jewish state's borders and beyond.

Recently, Congress supported measures to counter the threat of expanding rocket and missile arsenals in the region. In late spring, the House of Representatives approved the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that includes significant U.S.-Israel cooperative missile defense funding for the 2016 fiscal year.

The bill authorizes \$474 million toward defense initiatives—including Iron Dome, David's Sling and Arrow-3—and research and development funding for U.S.-Israel cooperative missile and rocket defense programs.

Overwhelming congressional support for the funding of missile defense systems follows the impact of the Gaza conflict in 2014. While the Iron Dome missile defense system proved invaluable, both nations understand the significance of continuing to strengthen these life saving measures.

Just weeks before the House Armed Services Committee approved the 2016 funds, David's Sling reached a significant milestone. The anti-ballistic missile system successfully intercepted targets in a series of tests conducted with the U.S. Missile Defense Agency. Expected to become operational this summer, David's Sling is poised to significantly bolster Israel's defense against mid- to long-range missiles.

Working in close collaboration with the pro-Israel community, broad bipartisan majorities in Congress have supported the development of these critical defensive systems by authorizing cooperation and ensuring funding.

This 4th of July, the pro-Israel community has much to celebrate. Together, the United States and Israel continue working toward a safer tomorrow.