



Middle East Spotlight

Thankful for a Strong U.S.-Israel Relationship

On Thanksgiving, Americans gather with friends and family to share a good meal and express gratitude for their blessings. At the top of this list, many will note with appreciation the unprecedented freedoms and safety we enjoy in the United States.

Indeed, it is our great fortune to celebrate as Americans Jews, secure in our ability to practice our faith openly and in a manner of our choosing. However, as we feast, we are not immune to the fact that the world continues to need repair. For far too many people around the globe lack the basic safety and security we too often take for granted.

One need only look to the Israel to see how different things can be: Hamas continues to rebuild its rocket arsenal and terror tunnels; Hezbollah has 150,000 rockets, mortars and missiles aimed at Israel; and Iran continues to test ballistic missiles and fund terrorist proxy groups.

Given this array of threats, American support for Israel has never been more important. The Sept. 14 signing of a new U.S.-Israel Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) represents an important milestone in the U.S.-Israel relationship for which we can be truly thankful.

This ten-year agreement—the largest U.S. aid package ever—will provide **\$38 billion** in American security assistance to Israel through 2028. Within this sum, \$5 billion is dedicated to fund joint missile defense programs.

As historical context, the two countries signed their first ten-year MOU in 1998. Under that agreement, Israel received **\$21.3 billion** in aid. Moreover, in 2007, the United States pledged **\$30 billion** to Israel under the current MOU, which will expire in 2018.

U.S. security assistance is critical for helping the Jewish state defend itself—by itself. With these funds, Israel will be able to modernize and better equip its armed forces. Moreover, this MOU will send a strong message to regional adversaries that America and Israel stand together amid increased instability in the Middle East.

So this Thanksgiving, while much of the Middle East remains mired in conflict, we can give thanks for our ability as Americans to ensure our nation's continued commitment to Israel. We can be thankful for both the work of President Obama and his administration for forging this landmark agreement, and for the bipartisan majorities in Congress who urged the administration to increase U.S. support for the Jewish state.

For more information about U.S. security assistance to Israel, please visit www.aipac.org.