



Middle East Spotlight

Celebrating Independence

As we celebrate American Independence Day on July 4, we have much to be thankful for, in particular being blessed to live in a country known for its ingenuity. Over our 242 years of independence, American advances have allowed us, and people around the world, to live more liberated lives. In the 70 years since Israel's founding, the Jewish state too has developed a culture of constant innovation. Now, the two allies are working together to develop technologies that will provide even greater freedom through the promotion of energy and water independence.

America and Israel understand that developing next-generation energy technologies, such as alternative fuels, is a national security imperative and are working together toward this goal. The American and Israeli governments, as well as private business ventures in both countries, are partnering to promote new energy solutions and ensure our long-term energy independence.

The 2014 U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership Act (SPA), which President Obama signed into law after it passed 410-1 in the U.S. House and unanimously in the U.S. Senate, affirmed in law that Israel is a "major strategic partner" of the United States, and authorized expanded U.S.-Israel cooperation in a wide range of fields, including technologies that promote energy independence. In the four years since the passage of SPA, the United States and Israel have made important advances.

The Fiscal Year 2018 Omnibus Appropriations bill, which passed Congress on March 23, included an appropriation for the establishment of a U.S.-Israel Center of Excellence in Energy and Water Technology—the first new appropriation in a decade for a U.S.-Israel non-defense program. This new center brings together the best minds in both countries for the development of new energy and water technologies.

The March 23 bill also fully funded the U.S.-Israel Binational Industrial Research and Development Energy program (BIRD-Energy) and expanded its mandate. BIRD-Energy is a bilateral cooperative program whereby U.S and Israeli companies may apply jointly for grants to cover up to 50 percent of their project development and commercialization costs. The most recent (October 2017) BIRD-Energy awards included projects that would develop new processes of ethanol production; a safe hydrogen transport and storage system; and a way to convert biomass to isoprene and Jet Fuel.

Building on these partnerships, on Dec. 4, 2017, the United States and Israel [entered into](#) a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to increase access to energy in sub-Saharan Africa. The MOU will enable the Jewish state to join the Power Africa initiative, which is led by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Spearheaded by the United States, the initiative seeks to connect 60 million households in Africa to the electricity grid by 2030.

America and Israel strengthen each other by working together to address important energy and security challenges. These policies, initiatives and resulting technologies also benefit the energy independence of countless countries around the world. This Independence Day, that's certainly worth celebrating.