Representing approximately one penny of every budget dollar, foreign aid is a cost-effective investment in America’s national security and economic prosperity. To this end, Congress should support a robust foreign aid budget and oppose disproportionate cuts in order to ensure America’s strong leadership position in the world.

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EDITORIAL

The Case for Foreign Aid

The Trump administration’s Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 budget request proposes a 32 percent cut in U.S. foreign aid. However, the United States faces significant, ever-evolving national security challenges abroad which necessitate a robust foreign aid budget. At about one percent of the budget, foreign aid is a cost-effective, small investment that enables Washington to engage across the globe and helps preserve America’s safety, security and prosperity.

FOREIGN AID PROMOTES ECONOMIC GROWTH AT HOME.

In the current global economy—in which ninety-five percent of the world’s consumers live outside the United States and one in five American jobs is linked to U.S. exports—foreign markets are crucial to the growth of American businesses.

By helping countries stabilize their governments and economies, the United States fosters new customer bases for American businesses and creates more jobs at home. And by funding commercial attaches and trade assistance programs, foreign aid helps U.S. businesses create the relationships and the support they need to sell in foreign markets. In contrast, cuts in the foreign aid budget “would deprive American companies of potential new markets and make them less competitive, while also harming the health and productivity of some of the poorest people in the world,” according to Bill Gates.

FOREIGN AID BOLSTERS AMERICA’S NATIONAL SECURITY.

American military leaders have repeatedly warned that the United States cannot meet its security challenges through military actions alone—foreign aid, to include American diplomacy, reinforces American military efforts to promote stability in crucial conflict zones.

According to Secretary of Defense James Mattis in February 2017, “The more that we put into the State Department’s diplomacy, hopefully the less we have to put into a military budget…” That same month, more than 120 retired generals and admirals similarly wrote to Congressional leadership that “elevating and strengthening diplomacy and development alongside defense are critical to keeping America safe.”

Terrorist organizations, such as al-Qaida, Hezbollah, Hamas and the Islamic State (ISIS), prey on the world’s disenfranchised to spread their anti-Western ideology and recruit new adherents. A small investment in foreign aid can help avert wars and ensure our diplomats operate safely. By advancing economic, political and social stability in other nations, foreign aid can help prevent these areas from becoming breeding grounds for terrorism. “Prevention—whether of terror attacks, weapons proliferation, pandemic disease, economic meltdown, societal collapse or the spread of radical ideology—is always cheaper and easier,” AIPAC CEO Howard Kohr stated in written testimony submitted to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs in April 2017.
SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO ISRAEL HIGHLIGHTS THE DIVIDENDS OF A ROBUST FOREIGN AID BUDGET.

In a Middle East that is increasingly chaotic and uncertain, Israel is the one stable, reliable, democratic ally that the United States can consistently count on. Aid to Israel gives the Jewish state the resources it needs to serve as an anchor of stability in the region and deter the combination of forces arrayed against it.

Accordingly, in the over 40 years since the 1973 Yom Kippur War, U.S. support for Israel through annual security assistance has helped deter conflict by making it clear to potential foes that they cannot defeat the Jewish state. In 2007, the United States and Israel signed a 10-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) calling for America to provide $30 billion in security assistance over the next decade. And in 2016, the two countries signed a new MOU that pledges $38 billion in security assistance between 2019 and 2028, including $5 billion for missile defense.

This assistance is a key element of Israel’s defense posture and the most tangible way the United States helps Israel maintain its military superiority and defense capabilities in a region full of growing threats: an aggressive Iran, hundreds of thousands of Hezbollah and Hamas rockets pointed at the Jewish state, civil war in Syria, an uncertain future in Jordan and ISIS in the Sinai Peninsula.

Cooperation between the two countries in intelligence, homeland security, missile defense and counterterrorism has also helped the United States meet its growing security challenges. As a result of the strong friendship between Israel and the United States, the Israel Defense Forces and the U.S. military share technologies and techniques that greatly benefit both nations.

In June 2017, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities Thomas Harvey praised the mutually beneficial, bilateral relationship, stating that “The jointly developed Arrow and David’s Sling weapon system programs provide Israel with the capability to defend itself against imminent and emerging ballistic missile threats while benefiting the United States through technology sharing.”

REPRESENTING APPROXIMATELY ONE PENNY OF EVERY BUDGET DOLLAR, FOREIGN AID IS A COST-EFFECTIVE INVESTMENT IN AMERICA’S NATIONAL SECURITY AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY.

To this end, Congress should support a robust foreign aid budget and oppose disproportionate cuts in order to ensure America’s strong leadership position in the world.

Congress should also demonstrate America’s unwavering commitment to Israel by supporting
$3.1 billion for U.S. security assistance to Israel in FY 18—in accordance with the current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two countries—as well as $705.8 million for joint U.S.-Israel missile defense cooperation. 🇺🇸🇮🇱

Indian Prime Minister Modi’s Historic Trip to Israel

Last week, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi made history as the first Indian head of government to visit Israel since the two countries established formal diplomatic relations in 1992. Prime Minister Modi’s trip fulfilled a commitment he made shortly after becoming prime minister in May 2014. During his three-day stay on July 4-6, Modi expressed deep affection for Israel and demonstrated the remarkable advancement of the two countries’ ties over the last 25 years. “We are confident that 25 years from now, Indians and Israelis will look back on this visit as the first of many historical milestones that we reached together in the great friendship between our peoples,” wrote Modi and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a joint editorial published in the Indian and Israeli press just before the trip.

DURING THE VISIT, MODI AND NETANYAHU PLEDGED TO DEEPEN BILATERAL COOPERATION IN A VARIETY OF AREAS. The two countries announced seven new agreements, including in areas like water conservation, agriculture and space. India and Israel also agreed to set up a new $40 billion technological innovation fund, establish a joint CEOs forum and facilitate the granting of business visas.

These understandings coincide with an already large body of cooperative arrangements between the two countries in both defense and civilian areas. Just in the past few months, for example, the government-owned Israel Aerospace Industries reached two major deals with India: a $2 billion contract to provide missiles to the Indian army and for India’s first aircraft carrier, and an additional $630 million contract to supply missile defense systems to the Indian navy. On the civilian side, Israel is establishing up to 30 centers of excellence in local communities across India to help train farmers and utilize modern technology to improve sanitation.

MODI’S ISRAEL TRIP REPRESENTS A FUNDAMENTAL, SYMBOLIC MILESTONE.

The Modi visit demonstrates that the Jewish state is continuing to expand its relations with other countries even in the face of a pernicious delegitimization campaign: That the leader of the world’s second-largest country (1.3 billion people) with the world’s second-largest Muslim population (180 million) came to Israel (with a population half the size of India’s capital, New Delhi) to embrace its prime minister and deepen bilateral ties underscores that fact. To fully appreciate the significance of Modi’s highly-publicized visit, one should contrast his embrace with the increasing isolation and stigmatization Israel faces from several European countries and international organizations. The progress of Indian-Israeli
relations should give pause to proponents of boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel.

INDIA AND ISRAEL DID NOT ALWAYS ENJOY CORDIAL RELATIONS.

Ties between these two countries have succeeded against early odds. Although both countries endured painful partition experiences in the late 1940s on their respective paths to independence, both India’s and Israel’s interests diverged over the subsequent four decades. While India allowed Israel to establish a consulate in Bombay (now Mumbai) in 1953, India’s leaders preferred to maintain diplomatic distance. As a co-founder of the Non-Aligned Movement, India chose to support Egypt and other Arab countries in their confrontation with Israel. By the 1970s, India had become a vocal critic of Israel and champion of the Palestinian cause. And for many years, Indian leaders resisted close ties to Israel, fearing alienation from their Arab and Iranian friends as well as tens of millions of Indian Muslim voters.

This frosty relationship began to thaw in the late 1980s in response to internal conditions in India and external global events. At home, Indian leaders embraced economic reform and global integration to boost India’s failing economy. In response to the breakup of the Soviet Union and the beginning of the 1991 Madrid peace conference, India revisited its relations with Israel, culminating in the establishment of full diplomatic relations in 1992 and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s 2003 visit to India.

RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL HAVE STEADILY GROWN IN AREAS OF COMMON INTERESTS.

Improving relations with Israel would eventually become a consensus issue among India’s two largest political parties, the left-leaning Congress Party and the right-leaning Bharatiya Janata Party, currently headed by Prime Minister Modi. Accordingly, Indian relations with Israel have steadily grown, even as government leadership has oscillated between the two parties in recent decades.

On the defense front, Israel has become India’s second-largest arms supplier, a reliable partner in counterterrorism cooperation and a collaborator in joint training exercises, weapons testing and satellite launches.

India also faces significant challenges in areas like water management, renewable energy and agriculture. Israeli technological advances in these realms can in turn greatly benefit India. “Israel has progressed so much today because of its penchant for innovation,” Prime Minister Modi said during his visit. “India and Israel can walk together shoulder to shoulder in the field of technology.”

Overall non-defense trade between the two countries grew from $200 million in 1992
to approximately $5 billion in 2016. Both countries have also been promoting increased people-to-people cooperation and tourism. Thus, Indian tourism to Israel grew by nearly 50 percent in January-March 2017 from the same period in 2015.

**AS A COUNTRY THAT HAD WHOLEHEARTEDLY ENDORSED THE PALESTINIAN NARRATIVE WITH RESPECT TO ISRAEL, INDIA NOW SEES NO CONTRADICTION IN PURSUING GOOD RELATIONS INDEPENDENTLY WITH BOTH PARTIES.**

While in Israel, Prime Minister Modi and his team notably made clear that they see no linkage or contradiction between their relationship with Israel and their relationship with the Palestinians or wider Arab world; in fact, the Indian prime minister purposely chose not to visit Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah when he was only a few miles away in Jerusalem. While it is true that President Abbas visited India just weeks prior in May, it was once unthinkable for India to uncouple its historic support for Palestinian national aspirations from its ties with Israel.

**MODI’S VISIT UNDERSCORES THE TWO COUNTRIES’ NEWLY FORGED PARTNERSHIP IN DEALING WITH THE SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES IN THEIR RESPECTIVE DANGEROUS NEIGHBORHOODS.**

Soon after becoming prime minister in May 2014, Modi decided to build upon the efforts of his predecessors in terms of advancing relations with Israel. When he attended the United Nations (U.N.) General Assembly in New York in September 2014, he held separate publicized meetings with Prime Minister Netanyahu and American Jewish leaders. Since then, while India has continued to support the majority of anti-Israel resolutions at the U.N., it has abstained from several, representing a positive departure from past practices.

During his Israel visit, Prime Minister Modi emphasized the two countries’ important partnership in fighting terrorism and confronting India’s high poverty rate. He spoke of what he saw as the shared values and destinies of two historic civilizations that span beyond the narrow interests of two nation-states. For Israel, the prime minister’s visit and the deepening of bilateral relations with India represent an important milestone, especially given the ongoing international campaign of political and economic isolation against it. 

**INTERVIEW**

**IMPACT-se CEO Marcus Sheff on Radicalization in Palestinian Authority Textbooks**

For decades, Palestinian primary-and secondary-school textbooks have imparted anti-Semitic tropes and glorified violence against Jews and Israelis. According to a new study published in April 2017 by the Jerusalem-based IMPACT-se (Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education), this trend is worsening. Joining *Near East Report* to discuss increased radicalization in Palestinian Authority (PA) textbooks is IMPACT-se’s Chief Executive Officer, Marcus Sheff.
Q: What is IMPACT-se’s methodology when reviewing Palestinian textbooks? What factors determine whether a particular curriculum is radical or not?

A: IMPACT-se utilizes the content analysis research method in reviewing all curricula we review, be they Israeli, Palestinian, Turkish or Iranian materials. We do not cherry-pick data; we check every line of every book.

The content of textbooks is examined according to the following criteria, derived from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) standards for peace and tolerance in school education:

- **RESPECT:** The curriculum should promote tolerance, understanding and respect toward the “Other,” his or her culture, achievements, values and way of life.

- **INDIVIDUAL OTHER:** The curriculum should foster personal attachment toward the “Other” as an individual, his or her desire to be familiar, loved and appreciated.

- **NO HATE:** The curriculum should be free of wording, imagery and ideologies likely to create prejudices, misconceptions, stereotypes, misunderstandings, mistrust, racial hatred, religious bigotry and national hatred, as well as any other form of hatred or contempt for other groups or peoples.

- **PEACEMAKING:** The curriculum should develop capabilities for non-violent conflict resolution and promote peace.

- **UNBIASED INFORMATION:** Educational materials (textbooks, workbooks, teachers’ guides, maps, illustrations, aids) should be up-to-date, accurate, complete, balanced and unprejudiced, and use equal standards to promote mutual knowledge and understanding between different peoples.

Q: Has the PA’s school curriculum become more radicalized in terms of problematic images, concepts or language? Have you found any sections that encourage coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians?

A: An analysis of the new 2016 PA school textbooks published for grades 1–4 points to an increased radicalization of the Palestinian national identity over the last year.

The curriculum is now educating Palestinian elementary-age children—the very youngest at school—to engage in active conflict. Children are being groomed to become martyrs—to sacrifice their lives when the opportunity arises. These children are now being educated with the disposition to fight Israelis, both in the current reality as well as from a future Palestinian state.

These new textbooks for the first four grades dovetail with the PA’s upper grades textbooks, which show a commitment to the PLO’s path that combines diplomacy and violence with the overarching goal of a full “liberation” of Palestine.

This significant—even alarming—deterioration of the curriculum’s message when compared with our review of previous texts for these age groups does not bode well for future peace prospects.

Q: Are there any particular school subjects where this radicalization is most pronounced? Or is it present in all subjects and at all grade levels?

A: Radicalization is prevalent in all subjects—even in math. For instance, in *Mathematics,*
Grade 4, Vol. 1 (2016), children are taught: “The number of martyrs of the First Intifada during 1987–93 totaled 2,026 martyrs, and the number of martyrs of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Intifada in the year 2000 totaled 5,050 martyrs while the number of the wounded reached 49,760. How many martyrs died in the two Intifadas?” (p.35).

But clearly, topics that deal with national identity, such as the National Education and Socialization course, have a greater proclivity to radicalization.

Q: How is Palestinian identity depicted in textbooks? How does this depiction inform your report’s overall analysis?

A: The stress is on an Arab-Palestinian nationalism that covers the territory of the British Mandate in Palestine in 1922–1948. Textbooks refer to a Palestinian state established on the entirety of [historical] “Palestine,” (including Israel proper).

Lower grade texts provide the contours of Palestinian identity, assuming that children between six and 10 years of age are still too young to understand the complex realities that surround them. This does not mean that children this age cannot grasp the presence of cultural and political “Others” toward whom compassion and empathy can be expressed. Indeed, the curriculum encourages accepting the Christian minority, women, the elderly and the disabled. But these young children are not taught to have a similar understanding of Israelis in all their multicultural forms who share land, heritage, history and a future with Palestinian Muslims. Instead, one finds a combination of complete denial and hatred of Israel as an existing neighbor.

Students in the upper grades are provided a more complex historical and strategic perspective of the Palestinian worldview as they prepare for their matriculation exams. These textbooks present a much harsher historical and political perspective of Israel as a bitter rival and enemy in war and diplomacy.

Q: How do these PA textbooks approach the peace process? Do the textbooks paint a black and white picture, or is there any level of nuance?

A: The textbooks explain to Palestinian children that Palestinian statehood is “one of the most pressing issues on the international agenda,” and is not a bilateral issue. Therefore, there is really not an expression of the peace process in the curriculum. Indeed, in explaining the benefits of the failed PA attempt in 2011 to attain Member State status at the United Nations, the Palestinian schoolbook points, first and foremost, to the “transfer of the Palestinian question from a question controlled by Israel, via bilateral negotiations, into an international question.” By moving unilaterally, the Palestinians will in
this view be able to grant Palestinian citizenship to Palestinians all over the world, which will automatically grant them the right of return to their homeland as well as various means to pressure Israel internationally.

Students are informed of the Oslo process and that final status negotiations are part of the accords but—blaming Israel—stresses the hopelessness of negotiations.

Thus, the paradigm returns to a permanent engagement in a struggle that involves armed conflict, diplomatic pressure and some negotiations (mostly rejections of initiatives deemed too harmful to their cause).

The curriculum for grades 11–12 describes the current phase in Islamic terms, as a struggle until the day of resurrection:

“The people of the Levant in general and Palestine in particular are in a state of ribat [guerrilla actions] until the Day of Resurrection…If you examine the history of Palestine, you shall find that momentous battles took place on Palestine’s soil. Its inhabitants are in constant struggle against their enemies” (Islamic Education, Grade 12, 2014, pp. 86–87).

The curriculum also envisions a large Palestine with Jerusalem, not just East Jerusalem, at its center. There is no room for Jews or Israelis in the future capital city of Palestine:

“Jerusalem is a Palestinian city and capital of the State of Palestine. The Palestinian flag will be hoisted on the city’s walls after the liberation from Israeli occupation, God willing” (National Education and Socialization, Grade 4, Vol. 1, 2016–17, p. 26).

The above is a political map of Palestine (Mathematics, Grade 1, Vol. 1, 2016–17, p. 143) that includes the entire territory of Israel, with neighboring Arab countries; but Israel is not depicted. The assignment for the student is to look at the map and find the city of Ramallah, then locate four other cities, to the north, to the south, to the east and to the west of Ramallah. The map includes many Israeli cities with Arab names, including, interestingly, Tel Aviv which carries the translation: Tal al-Rabi (Mound of Spring).

In effect, the curriculum for all grades reflects a comprehensive Palestinian strategy likely based on the Sixth Fatah Conference of 2009, which established a policy of unilateral diplomatic effort in the international arena to accompany “popular resistance.”

The curriculum also promotes the much older paradigm of a ceaseless effort to destroy Israel in stages. This generation of Palestinian children is methodically being educated in the spirit of the Ten-Point Program adopted by the Palestine National Council (PNC) in 1974. The program called for the establishment of a national authority “over every part of
Palestinian territory that is liberated” with the aim of “completing the liberation of all Palestinian territory,” and included an uncompromising rejection of Israel through a combination of violence and world community pressure to accommodate Palestinian demands.

So, what used to be the strategy of one extremist guerilla movement has now become the standard for all Palestinian school students.

Palestinian students vow to “saturate the generous land” with their blood. Each student recites, “I vow I shall sacrifice my blood… will remove/eliminate the usurper from my country, and will annihilate the remnants of the foreigners.” There is apparently no restriction on violence until the last Israeli is out of Palestine.

The vision presented by the curriculum is that of a struggle “until the day of resurrection” to secure one Arab Palestine that includes all the territory of Israel, with Israel’s capital as the Palestinian capital, and being part of the “Arab Homeland,” Arab Nation and Muslim Nation. A massive “return” of Arab Palestinians into what is now Israel is envisaged.

We assess then that a systematically promoted hatred of all things Jewish/Israeli likely makes students malleable to more direct calls for action as required by the PA (exemplified during the most recent wave of stabbing attacks).

While there are limits to overt incitement in the official Palestinian curriculum for reasons of deniability, the curriculum seems designed to create an Us (Palestinian)-versus-Them (all things Israel) mentality that legitimizes all forms of fighting and struggle.

Q: How does the depiction of “the Other” (i.e., Israelis) differ from the depiction of Palestinians in Israeli textbooks?

A: Israeli curriculum research in the past two decades has acknowledged that attitudes towards the Arab and Palestinian “Other” have significantly improved in Israeli textbooks published in the 1990s and onwards.

These studies indicate that representations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are currently depicted in a more balanced and objective manner in these textbooks than it was in the past, with books abandoning stereotypes and including more of the Palestinian point of view than their predecessors. While the same studies also contend that Israeli textbooks are inclined to present such trends as self-victimization (or “siege mentality”), ethnocentrism and bias, most large-scale Israeli curriculum studies show that these trends have dramatically decreased since the 1990s.

Israeli textbooks see peace as the ultimate goal, and depict it as highly desirable and achievable, while war is described as a negative occurrence, though a necessary one at times.

The textbooks acknowledge Palestinian presence in Israel before 1948, the development of a national Palestinian identity and different aspects of the Palestinian narrative, rationale and experiences (including the Nakba and Palestinian suffering).

Maps also recognize Palestinian physical presence in the area, including major Palestinian cities and other forms of Palestinian geographical presence such as marking Palestinian Authority territories, marking the “Green Line” and at times detailing Areas A, B and C delineated in the Oslo Accords.

Israeli textbooks do not include messages of incitement or stereotypes against Palestinians. In some cases, these textbooks include themes
such as ethnocentrism and self-perception of Israel and the Jews as the main victims of war and violence, who only react to Arab or Palestinian hostility. However, it could be argued that such trends of self-justification are natural and commonplace for government-approved textbooks, especially for a society in a protracted conflict.

Israeli textbooks explain the complexities and political disagreements within Israeli society but maintain a clear message of tolerance and coexistence in regard to Arab and Muslim minorities, and towards Palestinian-Israeli citizens in particular. Textbooks include respectful representation of Arab and Muslim culture and heritage, including direct and personal narratives of Arab and Muslim minorities in Israel.

Q: What are your recommendations for reversing the troubling trend in Palestinian textbooks?

A: One conclusion is the urgency of this moment. Those observers who believe that continuing the status quo while focusing on economic issues is the least harmful path, may find it appropriate to reconsider. The PA educational system has created a Palestinian nationalism that is incompatible with Israel’s existence, and this trend must be immediately reversed.

The Palestinian curriculum should eliminate its commitment to eternal war and the veneration of martyrdom. Schools have to stop teaching generation after generation of Palestinian youth that their homeland is comprised of the area that includes Israel, in addition to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. “Resistance,” translated into an eternal jihad war through ribat, should not be part of the curriculum.

Instead, Israel must be plainly described as a legitimate nation-state. Students are now left with a state of cognitive dissonance and confusion. The PA curriculum should cease describing Israel as the source of all evil. It should cease educating for settling millions of Palestinians in Israel and give up the concept of “resistance” (conquest of your neighbor in stages) and “martyrdom” (suicide killings) as recurring motifs.

The PA should also stop endangering Palestinian children. They should not be used as cannon fodder for an old generation of guerrilla fighters and new generation of Islamists. The curriculum should give up on the centrality of struggle, heroism, suicide and death. It should cease stereotyping Israelis as farcical villains and begin talking about them as neighbors and fellow humans who have a long history and cultural roots in the region.

The once-entertained hope that independent Palestinian curricula would become a peace-oriented enterprise seems to have been dashed. Evaluating the curriculum from the point of view of UNESCO’s standards for peace and tolerance in school education, it is clear that the curriculum does not meet these standards.

Yet, if any hope for peace is to be found, it must start with curricula that have peace at their core. It is late but hopefully not too late. A change in Palestinian education to conform to international standards—from a guerrilla mentality to peace and mutual recognition—could serve as a leverage point in helping to solve the conflict. Palestinian education—the curriculum, school activities and social media—should therefore abide by UNESCO standards while:

- Committing to the spirit and language of the peace process;
• Advocating mutual understanding and peace, rather than “martyrdom” and eternal violent struggle; and

• Treating Israel as a legitimate nation and the Jews as fellow Middle Easterners, largely sharing the same religious and cultural heritage.

It should also avoid:

• Presenting a biased perspective of the Arab-Israeli conflict;

• Rejecting the rights of Jews and Israel’s existence; and

• Demonizing both Jews and Israel.

Marcus Sheff is the CEO of IMPACT-se. He previously worked as a political reporter before establishing his own strategic communications firm. He went on to serve as an executive at leading global media companies and as Director of The Israel Project’s Israel Office. He has briefed global leaders, testified at parliaments and appears regularly on international media.

Hezbollah: An Expanding Global Threat

Last month, two U.S. citizens were arrested on charges of providing material support to the Iranian-backed, Lebanon-based terrorist group Hezbollah. According to a June 8 statement by the Department of Justice, Hezbollah’s Islamic Jihad Organization (IJO) recruited Ali Kourani of the Bronx, New York and Samer el Debek of Dearborn, Michigan as operatives and provided them with military-style training in Lebanon. These latest allegations demonstrate yet again Hezbollah’s extended reach and ability to target American and Israeli interests.

THE RECENT ARRESTS UNDERSCORE HEZBOLLAH’S ONGOING EFFORTS TO TARGET AMERICANS AND ISRAELIS.

Debek—a trained bomb technician—allegedly traveled to a number of countries on his U.S. passport to gather information for Hezbollah. During a 2011 trip to Panama, he was tasked with “locating the U.S. and Israeli Embassies, casing security procedures at the Panama Canal and the Israeli Embassy, and locating hardware stores where explosive precursors could be purchased.”

Similarly, Kourani was arrested for allegedly conducting “pre-operational surveillance” at numerous U.S. military and intelligence buildings in New York, as well as John F. Kennedy International Airport. The indictment noted that he was also tasked with identifying individuals affiliated with the IDF. Over a series of interviews, Kourani revealed to the FBI that he was a part of the IJO’s plan to develop a network of sleeper agents who could carry out IJO assignments.

HEZBOLLAH HAS A LONG HISTORY OF TARGETING AMERICANS AND ISRAELIS.

• 1983: Hezbollah carried out two suicide bombings in Beirut—an April bombing of the U.S. Embassy which killed 63 people
Hezbollah has traditionally relied on huge handouts from Iran—now totaling up to $1 billion annually. At the same time, the group has developed multiple new revenue streams including a worldwide network of supporters and operatives.

Hezbollah is deeply involved in transnational crime. As U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA) noted in a June 2017 hearing, the group has “developed a broad criminal network involved in a range of illegal activities—from drug trafficking to cigarette smuggling to money laundering to counterfeiting. These global terrorists double as global criminals.”

Also, according to the State Department, Hezbollah’s Foreign Relations Department (FRD) is responsible for covert operations globally, including recruiting, fundraising and gathering intelligence on behalf of Hezbollah. In June 2017 Congressional testimony submitted to the HFAC, Dr. Matthew Levitt of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy stated that Hezbollah stations FRD personnel worldwide to “provide logistics to visiting Hezbollah delegations and build ‘community centers’ to engender support for Hezbollah within local Shia communities and serve as a base for the group’s local activities.”

South America

Hezbollah’s criminal activities are especially prevalent in a region known as the tri-border area, where Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay converge. The U.S intelligence community regards the area as a “free zone for criminal activity,” from which $10 million annually is sent back to Lebanon.

Hezbollah also maintains close business relations with South American drug cartels, including the former enforcement arm of Pablo Escobar’s
Medellin Cartel, “La Oficina de Envigado.” The group has since become an independent organization that smuggles large quantities of cocaine to the United States and Europe.

In August 2016, a Miami federal grand jury charged a Hezbollah-linked Paraguayan man with attempting to smuggle 39 kilos of cocaine to Houston, Texas. In an earlier case, North Carolina-based Hezbollah operatives ran a successful cigarette-smuggling enterprise in 1996-2000; the cell was ultimately disrupted by an interagency counterterrorism effort that resulted in the indictment of 26 individuals.

Africa

In 2011, Lebanese financial institutions, including the Lebanese Canadian Bank (LCB), ran a successful money laundering operation through the U.S. financial system for Hezbollah. The Beirut-based bank wired funds to the United States for the purchase of used cars to ship to West Africa. The profits—along with proceeds from narcotics trafficking—were then funneled through Lebanese exchange houses by Hezbollah-controlled money couriers, who diverted substantial portions of the cash to Hezbollah.

Interagency counterterrorism efforts ultimately exposed the scheme, resulting in the Treasury Department’s designation of LCB as a “financial institution of primary money laundering concern.” Other criminal activities in Africa include tapping into Lebanese expatriate communities to finance front companies, blood diamond transactions, tax fraud and arms smuggling.

Europe

In Europe, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) work closely with international law enforcement agencies to combat Hezbollah’s nefarious activities. The two agencies recently collaborated with their Belgian, Italian, French and German counterparts in “Operation Cassandra,” culminating in a February 2016 announcement regarding the arrests of top leaders of a Hezbollah cell.

The State Department considers Hezbollah to be “the most technically capable terrorist group in the world” and its influence continues to grow—and with it, the threat it poses to the United States and Israel. Accordingly, the Trump administration, Congress and the intelligence community must continue to prioritize the fight, on all fronts, against Hezbollah.
AIEF Trips Honors Pro-Israel Senator Daniel Inouye

The American Israel Education Foundation (AIEF)—AIPAC’s affiliated foundation—has officially dedicated its foreign policy experts’ educational seminars to Israel in honor of the late Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HI), one of the staunchest congressional champions of the U.S.-Israel relationship to date.

On the inaugural Daniel K. Inouye Symposium for Policy Experts, held June 3-11, 2017, AIEF brought a group of 11 top non-governmental international affairs professionals to the Jewish state. In addition to meeting with a broad range of Israeli governmental and non-governmental experts, the participants learned first-hand about the late senator’s affinity for the U.S.-Israel relationship and about his many contributions to Israel’s safety and security.

Born in Hawaii to Japanese immigrants, Inouye joined the U.S. Army’s 442nd Regimental Combat Team in 1943 following the lifting of the ban on Japanese-American recruits.

The unit was composed of Americans of Japanese ancestry and ultimately became one of the most decorated units in U.S. history. In 1945, Inouye suffered a severe injury to his arm in battle—it would eventually be amputated—but persevered in leading an attack on a ridge heavily manned by German troops, for which he was honored with a Purple Heart, Bronze Star and ultimately the Medal of Honor.

Inouye later recounted that while recovering, he met a fellow soldier returning from Germany who “relayed to me the horrors of what all of us would later refer to as the Holocaust. I was stunned, preoccupied with the thought of what had taken place.”

“When Israel was established in 1948, I became a registered Israeli bond salesman without commission in an effort to do my part for the new nation,” said Inouye. “I grew more fascinated with a people whose resilience buoyed my own spirit and determination, and I vowed then that I would always stand up for the nation of Israel and her people.”

His passion for defending Israel continued once he was elected in 1962 to the U.S. Senate. As chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Inouye worked with both Democrats and Republicans to bolster bilateral ties between the two nations and advance numerous, bipartisan pro-Israel initiatives.

“Senator Inouye deeply understood the importance of the U.S.-Israel relationship, and as chairman of the Appropriations Committee,
worked tirelessly and effectively to ensure that America’s ally, Israel, had the necessary resources to defend her people,” said AIPAC in a statement shortly after his 2012 death at the age of 88.

Notably, he advocated for U.S. security assistance to Israel, paving the way for joint U.S.-Israel missile defense initiatives including the Arrow, David’s Sling and Iron Dome programs. Inouye was also a lead cosponsor of the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995, which deemed Jerusalem the capital of Israel and urged the United States to relocate its embassy there; spearheaded Iran sanctions legislation; and played a major role in U.S.-Israel strategic cooperation, helping establish the U.S.-Israel Binational Agricultural Foundation (BARD).

“Our people owe him an immense historic debt,” said then-Israeli Ambassador to the U.S. Michael Oren in 2012. “The Iron Dome system that recently intercepted hundreds of terrorist rockets aimed at our homes stands as enduring proof of his commitment to the defense of the Jewish state.”

Following his passing, Inouye was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In 2014, Israel named an Arrow missile defense site after him, marking the first time an Israeli military base has been named after a non-Israeli.

With his passion for the U.S.-Israel relationship and ability to reach across the aisle, Sen. Inouye’s efforts resulted in countless pieces of pro-Israel legislation becoming law. In dedicating its foreign policy experts’ trip in his honor, AIEF permanently memorializes Sen. Inouye for his decades of invaluable contributions toward advancing the U.S.-Israel relationship.

May his memory be a blessing.

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Washington Brief: A Recap of News From the Hill and Beyond

### KEY CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES ADVANCE U.S.-ISRAEL MISSILE DEFENSE FUNDS

On June 29, the House Appropriations Committee and the House and Senate Armed Services Committees advanced U.S.-Israel missile defense assistance and cooperation in the 2018 defense appropriations and authorizations bills. These funds will help Israel defend its citizens against rocket and missile threats, and contribute to America’s missile defense programs.

These committees provided a total of $705 million for research and development and procurement funding for the Iron Dome, David’s Sling, Arrow-2 and Arrow-3 U.S.-Israel cooperative missile defense systems. This funding represents a $558 million increase above the president’s budget request for these programs, and $105 million over last year’s adopted funding level. The Senate Appropriations Committee is expected to consider its version of the defense bill later this year.

The inclusion of these vital funds was specifically made possible through the leadership of House Appropriations Committee Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ) and Ranking Member Nita Lowey (D-NY), House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee Chairwoman Kay Granger (R-TX) and Ranking Member Peter Visclosky (D-IN), House Armed
Services Committee Chairman Mac Thornberry (R-TX) and Ranking Member Adam Smith (D-WA), House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces Chairman Mike Rogers (R-AL) and Ranking Member Jim Cooper (D-TN), Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain (R-AZ) and Ranking Member Jack Reed (D-RI), and Senate Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Strategic Forces Chairwoman Deb Fischer (R-NE) and Ranking Member Joe Donnelly (D-IN).

HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE ADOPTS KEY RESOLUTIONS

On June 28, the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Middle East and North Africa adopted a series of resolutions of interest to the pro-Israel community. H. Res. 359, authored by subcommittee Ranking Member Rep. Ted Deutch (D-FL) and Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), urges the European Union to designate Hezbollah in its entirety as a terrorist organization. H. Res. 218, authored by Rep. Ted Lieu (D-CA), recognizes the importance of the U.S.-Israel economic relationship and encourages new areas of cooperation.

On Iran, the subcommittee adopted three resolutions authored by the subcommittee’s chairman Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) and Rep. Deutch. H. Res. 185 calls on Iran to fulfill repeated promises of assistance in the case of Robert Levinson, the longest-held U.S. civilian prisoner in our nation’s history. H. Res. 274 condemns Iran’s state-sponsored persecution of its Baha’i minority and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights. And H. Res. 317 calls for the unconditional release of U.S. citizens and legal permanent resident aliens being held for political purposes by Iran.

WHITE HOUSE HOMELAND SECURITY ADVISOR ADDRESSES ISRAELI CYBER CONFERENCE

On June 26, White House Homeland Security Advisor Thomas Bossert addressed Tel Aviv University’s annual Cyber Week conference.

In his remarks, Bossert announced the commencement of a U.S.-Israel bilateral cyber working group, led by White House Cybersecurity Coordinator Rob Joyce and Dr. Eviatar Matania, the head of Israel’s National Cyber Bureau. The U.S. delegation also included representatives from Departments of State, Commerce, Defense, and Homeland Security, as well as the FBI.

“We believe that the agility Israel has in developing solutions will result in innovative cyber defenses we can test here and then take back to America,” said Bossert.

“The trip represents the first step in strengthening bilateral ties on cyber issues following President Trump’s visit to Israel, and they make good on the promise he made to Prime Minister Netanyahu at their meeting on Feb. 15,” he continued. “The bilateral working group of experts from across the agencies will work with an eye towards developing a different operational construct: focused on finding and stopping cyber adversaries before they are in your networks; before they reach critical infrastructure, and identifying ways to hold bad actors accountable—a different conversation indeed.”

In addition to members of Israel’s National Cyber Bureau, the U.S. delegation also met with senior leaders from the Israel Defense Forces, Shin Bet and Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice and Defense. These high-level meetings focused on a range of cyber issues, including critical
infrastructure, advanced R&D, international cooperation and workforce development.

**BIPARTISAN HOUSE LETTER TO TREASURY SECRETARY: URGE RE-IMPOSITION OF FATF COUNTERMEASURES AGAINST IRAN**

On June 16, Reps. Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ) and David Kustoff (R-TN), both members of the House Financial Services Committee’s Terrorism and Illicit Finance Subcommittee, sent a letter to Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin urging the United States to push for the re-imposition of countermeasures against Iran at the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Plenary.

FATF is the international organization responsible for legal and regulatory guidelines on anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing. Until June 2016, Iran had been on a FATF blacklist—and subject to countermeasures—due to its terrorist financing and deficiencies in combatting money laundering. FATF suspended these countermeasures last June for a 12-month period, when Iran submitted an action plan designed to address some of these issues.

The letter states, “It is now clear that Iran—the world’s leading sponsor of terrorism—has not made substantive efforts to stop its money laundering activities or to cut off its support for their major terrorist proxies, including Hezbollah, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.”

It continues: “We urge the administration to push FATF to reinstate countermeasures against Iran. Furthermore, we urge your department to clearly warn international banks about the dangers of conducting business with Iran, especially with companies wholly or partially owned by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which controls significant portions of the Iranian economy. The IRGC remains under U.S. sanctions and any bank conducting business with the group risks losing access to the U.S. financial system.”

FATF ultimately announced at the end of the plenary its decision to continue the suspension of countermeasure against Iran.

**MATTIS, LIEBERMAN DISCUSS “REGIONAL STRATEGY” AMID ESCALATION IN THE GOLAN HEIGHTS**

On June 27, U.S. Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis and Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman met at the annual Munich Security Conference to discuss “regional strategy” and the ongoing cooperation between the Israeli and U.S. militaries.

The meeting comes on the heels of three separate incidents on the Golan Heights in which errant shells fired from Syria landed in Israeli territory, forcing the Jewish state to respond against Syrian targets.

“We won’t hold back if necessary and when needed we will respond with all our might,” said Lieberman. “Anyone that wants to turn Syria into an Iranian base against Israel should think again.”

The issue of Iran’s expanding regional aggression was a major focus of Mattis’ April trip to Israel—his first since becoming defense secretary.

“It continues to threaten Israel and its neighbors with ballistic missiles, through its maritime and cyber activities and through proxies and surrogates, including Lebanese Hezbollah, a terrorist organization helping to keep [Syrian dictator Bashar Assad] in power in Syria,” he said in an April 21 joint press
conference with Lieberman.

To counter this mounting threat, Mattis reaffirmed America’s commitment to Israel’s qualitative military edge: “The United States maintains absolute and unwavering commitment to Israel’s security and to its qualitative military edge over Iran or other threats…Our alliance with Israel is the cornerstone of a larger regional security architecture, which includes cooperation with Egypt, Jordan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf partners.”

**UNITED STATES PROTESTS UNESCO RESOLUTION ON TOMB OF THE PATRIARCHS**

The United States strongly opposed a decision by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to designate the Old City of Hebron and the Tomb of the Patriarchs as part of Palestinian territory and a Palestinian World Heritage site.

“The UNESCO vote on Hebron is tragic on several levels. It represents an affront to history. It undermines the trust that is needed for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process to be successful. And it further discredits an already highly questionable UN agency. Today’s vote does no one any good and causes much harm,” said U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley.