

The week ending December 26, 2014

U.S. – ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

Obama Signs Landmark Law that Strengthens U.S. Israel Alliance

On Dec. 19, President Barack Obama signed the United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014—a historic measure that declares Israel a “major strategic partner” of the U.S. The U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014 (S.2673) significantly bolsters and expands the two-country alliance as they take on new obstacles and threats in the Middle East. “Today I have signed into law S. 2673, the ‘United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014,’ an Act that underscores the United States unshakeable commitment to Israel’s security and its future,” Obama said after signing the landmark legislation. “This bipartisan piece of legislation reflects the importance placed by my administration on strengthening and deepening U.S.-Israel bilateral cooperation and ties. It reinforces critical defense and security programs, which have reached an unprecedented level under my administration.” The legislation lays the groundwork for a growing U.S.-Israel relationship and encompasses domains including defense, intelligence, homeland security, cyber security, energy, water, agriculture, and alternative fuel technologies. Spearheaded by bipartisan leaders, the bill was authored by Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Ted Deutch (D-FL), Ed Royce (R-CA), Eliot Engel (D-NY) in the House and Sens. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Roy Blunt (R-MO) in the Senate. By expanding Israel’s status to “major strategic ally,” the bill includes major provisions that bind the two nations together and ensures Israel’s qualitative military edge in the region. The House of Representatives originally passed the legislation on March 5 by a resounding 410-1 vote. The Senate later adopted the bill on Sept. 18 by unanimous consent. The House passed that version and Obama signed it into law.

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ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

Israeli NGO sends team to typhoon-hit Philippines

The Israeli aid group IsraAID sent an emergency response team to the Philippines in the wake of a typhoon which has left hundreds of thousands of families homeless, reports [The Times of Israel](#). The team has been providing medical, psychological and social services and distributed food and supplies to the residents of Can Avid, in the country’s Eastern Samar province. IsraAID said in a statement Monday that its medical team has

treated over 400 people so far and that supplies had been delivered to some 400 affected families. The supplies included food and non-food items, according to IsraAID, such as rice, noodles, water, mosquito repellent, and hygiene kits. Typhoon Hagupit, known locally as Ruby, began as a frighteningly powerful storm earlier this month, leaving at least 21 people dead and forcing more than 1.6 million into shelters in the Philippines. Hagupit is Filipino for “smash” or “lash.” The 148-person medical team spent 11 days in Bogo City, treating more than 2,600 patients, including 800 children. The team also conducted 52 surgeries and delivered 36 babies, according to the army. The first of those 36 babies was named Israel by his parents.

Dreidel challenge puts new spin on breaking a Guinness World Record

Almost 800 people took a spin—and succeeded—at breaking the world record for simultaneous dreidel spinning on Sunday, which included political candidate and MK Tzipi Livni (Hatnua) as one of the participants. With Guinness World Record officials monitoring the 200-meter-long table, 754 adults and children successfully spun dreidels for 10 seconds in a row at the city's Sarona shopping compound. The previous record was for 377 dreidels. "We came here today to break a positive record," Livni said. "It's upon all of us to continue to create a better, more optimistic reality for our children and for all of Israel." According to [The Jerusalem Post](#), all of the dreidels were provided by Draydel House, a store known for creating luxury ceramic dreidels and themselves record holders for one of the largest dreidels in the world. The group broke the previous record of 734 set by a United Synagogue Youth group in Philadelphia on December 28, 2011.