

**TESTIMONY OF HOWARD A. KOHR,
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COMMITTEE (AIPAC), TO THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS STATE, FOREIGN
OPERATIONS AND RELATED PROGRAMS SUBCOMMITTEE**

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At this moment of growing turmoil and danger in the Middle East, AIPAC believes U.S. security assistance to Israel is critically important to advancing American strategic interests in the region and ensuring Israel's security. With Iran nearing a nuclear capability and the growth of additional threats to Israel, our aid ensures that we are equipping our closest ally with the resources to defend itself. We strongly urge the Subcommittee to approve the president's request for fiscal year 2014 of security assistance to Israel in the amount of \$3.1 billion as called for in the 2007 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the United States and Israel. We support approval of this aid in accordance with the legislatively mandated terms under which it has historically been provided, particularly provisions mandating the level of assistance, offshore procurement and early disbursement. We also support an overall vibrant, robust and bipartisan foreign assistance program as a critical tool to promote U.S. national security interests.

Growing Turmoil, Increased Threats

The Middle East is experiencing unprecedented change and instability, even greater than when I testified before you last year. The security architecture that Israel had depended on for the past 30 years is now very much in question. Israel is contending both with emerging threats and heightened traditional security challenges, including: Iran's continuing quest for a nuclear weapons capability, which could reach a critical point in 2013; tragic and widespread violence in Syria—home to the largest stockpile of chemical weapons in the region; Hizballah expanding its military might and influence in Lebanon—with an arsenal of at least 60,000 rockets aimed at Israel; growing instability challenging the Jordanian monarchy; political and economic uncertainty in Egypt; sophisticated weaponry being smuggled to Hamas and other Iranian-funded and -trained terrorist groups in Gaza; chaos in the Sinai; and Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas seeking reconciliation with an unreformed Hamas, obtaining statehood status at the United Nations and refusing talks with Israel. Amid these new realities, U.S. assistance to Israel, as the single most tangible expression of America's unshakeable support for our close ally, becomes more important than ever before.

Israel: America's Strategic Partner

In the midst of this uncertainty, Israel remains America's most reliable strategic partner in the Middle East. Israel and the United States are working ever closer together to defeat common threats and realize America's regional and global policy objectives. These threats range from terrorism, weapons proliferation and the spread of radical Islamist ideology to narcotics,

counterfeiting, smuggling and cyber warfare.

Israel is a reliable democracy that shares America's values and worldview in a region dominated by instability, radical forces, and extremist non-state actors. With no other country in the region—and few in the entire world—does the United States share the same level of strategic cooperation. American-Israeli cooperation begins with frequent high-level strategic exchanges among senior political and military leaders and extends to combined military planning and exercises, intelligence sharing and cutting-edge technological development. The historic American-Israeli alliance is perhaps the most stabilizing feature in an otherwise remarkably unstable region. The United States has also prepositioned materiel in Israel for use in the event that the United States ever needs to respond quickly to a future Middle East conflict. The two partners should continue to work to enhance their strategic cooperation even further.

Israel's presence in the region provides a de-facto cost-effective guarantor of security well beyond its borders. Furthermore, Israel's military strength, central geo-strategic location and expanding coordination with the United States provide a strong deterrent against Iran and other radical forces that threaten America, its allies, and regional and global U.S. objectives.

American military aid has helped Israel ensure a qualitative military edge (QME) over Arab countries that sought Israel's destruction and waged wars against Israel. U.S. support has also helped prevent war, because Arab states contemplating attacks on Israel know that they will face a U.S. ally defending itself with the world's best weapons systems. In addition, U.S. support has helped advance peace by letting Israel's enemies know that there is no alternative to negotiations. The United States and Israel, furthermore, share the objective of reaching a two-state solution through direct negotiations between Israel and the PA with no preconditions. Regrettably, the PA has placed preconditions on the resumption of negotiations and has turned to the U.N. for non-negotiated recognition of Palestinian statehood, a counterproductive move that undermines the prospects for peace.

Relationship Yields Important Technologies for Both Countries

The close partnership between the United States and Israel has yielded important military technologies such as the Arrow anti-ballistic missile defense system that is currently deployed in Israel. Jointly developed by the two allies, the Arrow is among the world's most sophisticated missile shields. It is the only operational system that has consistently proven that one missile can shoot down another at high altitudes and supersonic speeds. A radically new version, the Arrow-3, is currently under joint development. Israel and the United States are also collaborating on the development of a quick-reaction defense system, known as David's Sling, to address the more immediate threats posed by short- and medium-range missiles and rockets rapidly spreading throughout the region.

Similarly, Israel has developed the Iron Dome rocket defense system. Israeli civilians throughout southern and central Israel have been victimized by more than 9,500 indiscriminate rocket and mortar attacks, most recently during the unprovoked bombardments last November. The Iron

Dome uses small radar-guided missiles to intercept incoming Katyusha-style rockets. In 2011, recognizing the value of this system, the Obama administration requested—and Congress approved—\$205 million to help Israel fund Iron Dome. The investment has already paid off. During the recent Israeli operation in Gaza, more than 80 per cent of the rockets fired into Israeli towns from Gaza were intercepted by the Iron Dome.

The rapid development and deployment of this four-tiered missile-defense system has and will continue to play an important role in minimizing the threats Israel faces from the tens of thousands of missiles and rockets that its enemies are deploying.

Israeli Technologies and Techniques Help U.S. Soldiers

Strategic cooperation has also yielded a number of important Israeli military innovations that have been of great help to the United States. Many of these are currently in use by U.S. forces deployed throughout the world, including in Afghanistan and previously in Iraq.

The Emergency Bandage is an Israeli-invented first-aid device that is used to stop bleeding from hemorrhagic wounds caused by traumatic injuries in pre-hospital emergency situations. The bandages have saved many American lives in Afghanistan and Iraq.

An Israeli manufacturer that specializes in add-on modular armor kits is a leading provider of armor protection for U.S. military vehicles. This armor provides unparalleled protection against rocket-propelled grenades and has been credited with saving countless American lives. The cost-effective Litening targeting pod has provided pinpoint navigational and operational capabilities for American combat aircraft since the 1990s. Israeli-developed components provide essential technology for the F-16 fighter's wings and electronic components for U.S. tanks.

Technology from the Iron Dome could also bring life-saving benefits to U.S. forces in areas such as southwest and northeast Asia where short-range rockets pose a threat to American troops and strategic interests. After a successful track record of intercepting short-range rockets that were fired from Gaza into Israel, the United States is now looking into the feasibility of deploying such technology where it can have an immediate impact in protecting U.S. soldiers.

Israel Increasing Its Own Defense Spending

While Israeli technology helps to protect American troops on the battlefield, Israel has never asked U.S. troops to fight to defend Israel. It has instead requested U.S. assistance to supplement the tremendous resources Israel already invests in its defense budget. Israel spends more on defense as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) than any other nation in the industrialized world—roughly 6.5 percent—about one-and-a-half times that of the United States. However, the actual costs to the Israeli economy are much higher, taking into account lost productivity and the need for reserve duty, internal security and anti-terrorism spending. Israel's annual military and security budget has been barely sufficient to cover both immediate

operational needs and future force development. Even before the recent upheaval in the region, Israel had developed a 10-year plan of sustained increases in its own defense spending in addition to the expected growth in U.S. aid under the 10-year MOU. This plan has had to be radically altered and expanded in view of the new array of threats and challenges emerging across the region since 2011. During the decade covered by the U.S. aid agreement, Israel planned to spend \$150 billion on defense—a 50 percent increase over the previous 10-year period. Currently, however, Israel will be hard pressed to secure the necessary budgetary resources needed to build sufficient military capabilities for today’s more threatening regional environment. It will have little choice but to increase security spending to counter the wide range of new strategic challenges it now faces, or else face dangerous choices in delaying vital security priorities.

To cite just one example, terrorists repeatedly blew up the Sinai natural gas pipeline, which provided a large percentage of Israel’s gas. As a result, Israel has had to incur \$4 billion in additional, security-related expenses to fund imports of alternative, more expensive energy supplies. Given the increasing terrorist threats on its border with Egypt, Israel has also been forced to speed up work on building a fence on the southern border between Egypt and Israel. That fence has cost an estimated \$360 million. Now, in view of the spiraling chaos in Syria, Israel must also construct a similar modern barrier system on the Golan Heights.

Israel faces existential threats unlike almost any other country in the world. It faces traditional and asymmetric, conventional and unconventional threats from weaponry both from the shortest ranges (e.g., car bombs and mortars) to long-range missiles.

The American military hardware, including advanced fighter aircraft and naval vessels, that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) requires to maintain its QME is far more sophisticated, complex and expensive than anything it has needed in the past. The most recent U.S.-produced front-line fighter aircraft deployed by Israel, the F-16I, costs \$45 million apiece. By comparison, the U.S. F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, which Israel is seeking to purchase during the next decade, will cost at least \$160 million each. Israel is also investing more than \$2 billion to develop cutting-edge systems to combat short-range rockets and long-range missiles and building dozens of upgraded tanks and hundreds of armored vehicles to protect troops from advanced anti-tank missiles in the hands of Hamas and Hizballah. Israel’s aircraft, helicopters and drones must be outfitted with new protective systems against the flood of shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles emerging from Libya. State-of-the-art intelligence capabilities must be developed and deployed to keep pace with the range of shifting dangers. Civil defenses must be beefed up against the uncertainty of what may happen with Syria’s vast chemical weapons arsenal.

Even with this additional investment of its own national resources, there are many important weapons purchases and defense technology R&D efforts the IDF may have to delay because of insufficient funds as near-term priorities are shifted to address the uncertainties of the immediate evolving regional balance.

U.S. Aid Vital to Israel's Security

In this increasingly difficult budget environment, we are mindful of the daunting fiscal challenges facing the United States. However, we believe U.S. security assistance to Israel has been and remains a highly cost-effective program that strengthens U.S. interests at a relatively modest cost, while supporting American industries and sustaining high-tech and manufacturing jobs across the nation's 50 states. It ensures the continued strength and survival of our most reliable and effective ally in this vital region of the world. It sends a strong message to enemies of both the United States and Israel of the continued U.S. commitment to Israel's security. It reinforces the principle that the United States will live up to commitments made to our friends, particularly the important commitment made in the 2007 U.S.-Israel MOU that set levels of U.S. assistance for Israel over a 10-year period. And it tells the government and people of Israel that especially in a time of enormous unrest, the United States will ensure Israel has the means it needs to defend itself.

Conclusion

The United States and Israel together are facing many years of uncertainty, danger and opportunity in one of the most important regions of the world. As we face these challenges, there is little doubt that the United States is stronger when Israel is strong. I want to commend this Subcommittee, and especially Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member Lowey, for all you have done throughout the years to ensure that Israel and the U.S.-Israel relationship remain strong. That support will be more important than ever as our two nations work ever more closely together to ensure a democratic, stable and pro-Western Middle East.