

On April 2, 2025, AIPAC CEO Elliot Brandt submitted the following written testimony for the record to the U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittee on National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs in support of U.S. security assistance to Israel and robust funding for foreign aid.

For Fiscal Year 2026, AIPAC urges the subcommittee's full support for \$3.3 billion in security assistance for our strategic partner Israel, as set forth in the 2016 U.S.-Israel Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Security Assistance. We deeply appreciate this subcommittee's support of full funding of Israel's security assistance in every previous year under the MOU.

American assistance has enabled Israel to defend itself and reestablish its deterrence in the aftermath of October 7 – the deadliest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust. However, there can be no closure to the tragic events of October 7 until every one of 59 remaining hostages in Gaza, including 5 Americans, comes home and Hamas no longer controls Gaza. The United States must continue to stand with Israel as it wages a legitimate and justified war against Hamas.

Over the last 18 months, Iran and its terrorist proxies have launched a seven-front war against the Jewish state. Israel's successful military response has upended the Iranian-backed axis, offering the prospect for a transformed region in line with U.S. interests.

In Lebanon, a new hope for positive change is on the horizon for the first time in decades. Israel's military campaign has decisively weakened Hezbollah and bolstered the Lebanese Armed Forces. In Syria, Israel's campaign was an important catalyst that finally ended 50 years of the Assad family's brutal rule and ended over 13 years of civil war that killed over half a million people. The ultimate realization of Israel's goals of removing Hamas from power and disarming the terrorist group could also portend a path toward a brighter future for Gaza.

However, the overall picture is far from rosy. At this moment, Hamas still controls sufficient territory and capability in Gaza to launch missiles at central Israel. Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad are also seeking to attack Israel from the West Bank. The Houthis in Yemen pose a persistent threat to both Israel and the United States and have recently restarted ballistic attacks on Israel. Iran's escalatory direct aerial assaults on Israel have opened a new, dangerous chapter for the region – only compounded by the Iranian regime's unbridled pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Given the threats confronting Israel, America must continue to provide the Jewish state with the security assistance needed to ensure it can defend itself – by itself.

Israel: An Indispensable Strategic Partner

The United States has long defined Israel's survival and security as a key American interest. Israel's enemies are also America's enemies. When Israel degrades Hamas and Hezbollah, it makes America safer. When Israel destroys Syria's stockpile of chemical weapons, it makes America safer. When Israel targets Iran's ballistic missile production capability, it makes America safer. Every day, Israeli intelligence and technology are being shared with America to save American lives.

Today, the U.S. and Israel face evolving threats as the Iran-Russia-China-DPRK axis and rogue non-state actors increasingly exploit emerging technologies, such as drone and cyber capabilities, to further their aggressive and destabilizing ends. Israel stands at the forefront of global

innovation and is poised to be a critical and reliable ally to the U.S. as we engage in a historic, high-stakes race with China for global technological supremacy. The 2022 Jerusalem U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership Joint Declaration critically committed to “move forward the U.S.-Israel defense partnership through cooperation in cutting-edge defense technologies such as high energy laser weapons systems to defend the skies of Israel and in the future those of other U.S. and Israel security partners.”

Israel’s stable, democratic and dependably pro-American orientation ensures that America can consistently rely on its alliance with the Jewish state. This has been an enduring constant through Republican and Democratic administrations and across Israeli governments, anchored by bipartisan support in Congress for the relationship. Given the increasingly complex array of global threats facing America, Israel’s role as a reliable ally in a critical region is more important than ever.

We greatly appreciate that Congress’ strong bipartisan support for security assistance to Israel has enabled Israel to defend itself while securing vital U.S. national security interests in the region. This crucial assistance also helps support our own domestic U.S. defense industry, as Israel spends over 80% of the aid it receives on military hardware made in America.

Regional Challenges

In Gaza, Israel faces a persistent and ongoing threat from Hamas’ terrorist army. Israel has defeated the majority of Hamas battalions and destroyed a significant portion of the group’s terror infrastructure. However, Hamas is not yet defeated. The terrorist group has refused to disarm and still holds 59 hostages, including five American citizens, in the Gaza Strip. In recent weeks, Hamas has also demonstrated the capacity to launch missile attacks at Israeli population centers like Tel Aviv and Ashkelon. Israel must be given the time and support to complete its just and achievable objectives: removing Hamas from power, ensuring Hamas can never again threaten Israel as it did on October 7, and securing the return of all the hostages.

To the north, the fragile ceasefire agreement signed in late November has largely held, ending 13 months of daily missile and drone attacks from Lebanon that displaced some 70,000 Israelis. The months ahead will test the ability of the new Lebanese government and the Lebanese Armed Forces to stabilize the situation in southern Lebanon and make sure Hezbollah is no longer a threat to Israel. Additionally, Israel is preparing for potential threats emanating from Syria, where the fall of the Assad regime removed a major Iranian ally but created a vacuum that could be filled by other terrorist elements.

To the south, the Houthis in Yemen have resumed their ballistic missile attacks at Israel despite the ongoing U.S. military campaign to weaken their capabilities. The Iranian-backed terrorist group has caused the greatest disruption to global trade since the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing as much as 70 percent of international shipments away from the Red Sea.

Standing behind all these threats is, of course, the Iranian regime. Tehran remains the greatest threat to Israeli security and regional stability. Its two unprecedented and direct aerial assaults on Israel last year marked a new, dangerous escalation. In those attacks, Iran launched over 300 projectiles – including ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and drones – designed to cause immense death and destruction. These significant attacks represent only a small preview of the types of threats Israel could face in the future. Congress’ long-standing support for Israel’s missile

defense, along with the coalition of nations assembled by the U.S., helped ensure that Israel could repel these unprecedented assaults.

On the Iranian nuclear front, the regime has increased its stockpile of 20 and 60 percent enriched uranium, according to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) data. IAEA chief Rafael Grossi warned that Tehran already has enough uranium enriched to near-weapons-grade levels to make “several” nuclear bombs. Put simply, Iran is at the cusp of a nuclear-weapons capability developed explicitly to eliminate Israel.

It is in America’s vital interest for Israel – our sole reliable democratic ally in the region – to have the military capabilities needed to decisively defeat these mutual threats.

Israel is Dramatically Increasing Its Own Defense Spending

Committed to defending itself, by itself, Israel is significantly increasing its defense spending, ensuring it’s prepared to counter these ongoing and emerging threats. When Israel seeks assistance from the United States, it is not because it is not doing its own part.

Before October 7, Israel spent 5.47% of its GDP on defense, more than any other Western nation. This number rose to 9.29% during the war and is projected to be 6.35% in 2025, significantly more than the NATO-ally expectation of 2% – a benchmark that many European allies still struggle to meet.

This spending increase comes as Israel’s economy is under serious strain from the ongoing conflict, with significant numbers of reservists called up into military service, severe damage inflicted in the country’s north and south, and a substantial drop in tourism. Rising defense spending is also fueling higher interest rates and inflation. Investments in Israel’s high-tech sector declined by 30% in 2024.

Funding, Policy and Oversight Provisions

It is imperative that Congress reject attempts to threaten Israel’s security by linking new political conditions to aid. By continuing its policy of approving a clean appropriation to Israel, this subcommittee will strengthen Israel’s security, promote American interests, and enhance the prospects for peace. We express our appreciation to the subcommittee for consistently opposing and rejecting all efforts to attach new political conditions to Israel’s critical security funding.

We are also grateful to the Trump Administration for withdrawing National Security Memorandum 20 and expediting the delivery of arms to Israel, and we continue to oppose any legislative provisions that would impose new limits, restrictions or conditions on aid to Israel or military sales to Israel. Congress must continue to provide Israel with the capabilities necessary to guarantee its safety and security.

We further believe that continued U.S. aid to Egypt and Jordan is also important to help ensure stability in the region, as is the strong U.S. commitment to the Multinational Force and Observers mission in the Sinai. In addition, AIPAC supports ongoing Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation under the auspices of the United States Security Coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority – if Palestinian leaders demonstrate a commitment to this shared effort. We urge Congress to prioritize the hope for a better future for Israelis and Palestinians by reauthorizing and continuing to invest in the Middle East Partnership for Peace program – an important initiative spearheaded by former Representative and Appropriations Committee Chair

Nita Lowey, a tireless leader and steadfast supporter of the U.S.-Israel relationship. We want to extend our condolences to Rep. Lowey's family, former colleagues, and many friends throughout the world.

We also urge the subcommittee to maintain long-standing provisions in the bill and accompanying report that ensure strict oversight and reporting requirements related to Lebanon, Iran, Syria and the Palestinians. Any funding to the Palestinians must comply with the Taylor Force Act to put continued pressure on the Palestinian Authority to stop incentivizing terrorism. We urge the committee to make permanent the ban on U.S. funding to UNRWA, which has been hopelessly compromised by its support for and collaboration with Hamas. The subcommittee must also maintain existing provisions to cut assistance should the Palestinians continue to engage in counterproductive unilateralism at the United Nations or the International Criminal Court.

AIPAC continues to urge support for a robust and bipartisan foreign aid budget that ensures America's strong global leadership position. Foreign aid enables the United States to support key allies like Israel, spur our job-creating exports, stem the spread of diseases, and help prevent countries in turmoil from becoming breeding grounds for terrorism.

Discrimination Against Israel in the International Community

Israel's security challenges are compounded by attacks it faces at the United Nations and other international forums, where Israel's enemies attempt to isolate and demonize the Jewish state. The latest attacks have come in the forms of the International Criminal Court's issuance of baseless arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, as well as South Africa's defamatory attempt to falsely accuse Israel of genocide at the International Court of Justice. The U.S. must oppose such blatant attempts to weaponize and politicize international judicial fora against Israel. We also urge the subcommittee to maintain the prohibition on funding to the anti-Israel Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry and oppose the implementation of any of its illegitimate recommendations.

Conclusion

While Israel heavily invests its own resources in its own defense, U.S. security assistance remains essential to ensuring the Jewish state maintains a qualitative military edge (QME). **In accordance with the 2016 U.S.-Israel MOU, AIPAC strongly urges the subcommittee to approve \$3.3 billion in security assistance to Israel for fiscal year 2026 without any additional political restrictions.**

As Congress considers U.S. Middle East priorities, one thing remains certain: Israel is America's indispensable ally as Washington faces the threats and opportunities of tomorrow. Israel promotes America's values and interests in a critical region, while also leading the world in high-tech innovation. This subcommittee deserves great credit for its stalwart advocacy for the U.S.-Israel relationship. That includes not only reliably providing Israel with full funding of vital security assistance without any conditions but also incorporating important policy provisions on so many aspects of U.S. Mideast policy. This bipartisan support will remain even more critical as America and Israel continue to work together to address the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.