



American Assistance to Israel: Points to Remember

What are America's Goals for United States Foreign Aid?

U.S. Foreign Aid, which includes both military and economic assistance, is a carefully considered expenditure going to numerous countries and programs and is intended to advance America's humanitarian, political, development, peace and security priorities around the world.

U.S. Foreign Aid is a tool for implementing the mission of the U.S. State Department which is, "To advance freedom for the benefit of the American people and the international community by helping to build and sustain a more democratic, secure, and prosperous world composed of well-governed states that respond the need of their people, reduce widespread poverty, and act responsibly with the international system."

Despite its critical importance to the U.S. and its global partners, U.S. Foreign Aid makes up about 1% of the U.S. Federal Budget.

What is America's Goal in the Middle East?

Peace and Security - The top priority for the United States in the Middle East is peace and security. This includes Israel at peace with its Arab neighbors as well as a democratic Palestinian state that, like Israel, has secure and recognized borders. The interests of the U.S. are advanced where there is democracy, freedom of press, association, and religion, and where the rights of minorities are protected.

How Does the U.S. Advance its Goal of Peace and Security?

The United States must maintain an active diplomatic presence in the Middle East to help resolve conflicts, encourage negotiations and to foster peace between the various countries and factions. Financial and military assistance plays an important part in securing peace and stability in the region. American diplomatic engagement helped to broker the 1979 Camp David Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel and American financial and military assistance has helped keep the peace between countries that, previously, fought four wars costing over 30,000 Egyptian and Israeli lives. Continued aid to both countries advances America's role as a peacemaker and bridge-builder. American aid to Palestinians helps fund local security forces and contributes to the development of civic infrastructure, which is essential for future Palestinian independence. Assistance to Israel supports regional stability. U.S.-funded missile defense means Israel does not have to respond to every rocket fired from Palestinian territory.

How Does Military Assistance to Israel Advance This Goal?

- **Allies with Shared Values** – America and Israel are both democracies committed to the rule of law, freedom of speech, press and religion. Since the U.S. officially recognized Israel eleven minutes after the country gained its independence in 1948, the U.S. has maintained a strong relationship that has spanned both Democratic and Republican administrations.

- **U.S. Security Interests** – The cornerstone of American security policy in the Middle East, Israel is a stable democracy and reliable ally. Israel shares and advances many American interests in this crucial region including preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, combating terrorism and promoting an orderly process of democratic change and economic development. The current volatile situation in the Middle East—Iran continuing its pursuit of nuclear weapons capability, the turmoil in Egypt, the humanitarian crisis in Syria—underscores the critical nature of this unique regional partnership against extremism.

Military assistance to Israel carries an additional return on investment in that it helps support American jobs. This is unlike many other forms of aid provided to international partners. The vast majority of security assistance to Israel is spent on American-made goods and services.

How Much Military Assistance Does Israel Receive?

- Since 1985, the United States has provided around \$3 billion in annual grants to Israel. Almost all of this aid is in the form of military assistance. Nearly 75% of these funds are used to purchase defense equipment from American companies.
- Israel received economic aid in the past, but this was gradually phased out by 2008 as Israel developed its economy.
- In addition, Israel and the United States cooperate extensively in other military related areas, such as missile defense, joint research and development programs, large-scale military exercises and intelligence sharing.

Is American Military Assistance to Israel Offered Unconditionally?

Military assistance to Israel is not unconditional. Any assertion that Israel receives preferential treatment is deceptive and factually incorrect.

- Congressional oversight is required when the U.S. approves the provision of military aid to any ally, including Israel. Conditioned-agreements frequently determine how specific weapons may be used. All countries are subject to the same restrictions and conditions, including the Arms Export Control Act. Credible reports of the misuse of U.S. equipment are investigated and appropriate responses implemented.
- Israel, like other aid recipients, is under constant review. If Israel were found to have violated the Act, it would receive the same treatment as any other state. The U.S. does not give Israel a “blank check” to purchase military equipment or arms. All military purchases must be approved through formal planning and procurement processes and regular contact contributes to reviews of aid spending.
- Agreements between America and Israel, starting with the 1952 Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement, limit Israel’s use of military equipment to defensive purposes. This aligns with the restrictions of the Arms Export Control Act. The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, contains additional general provisions on the use of U.S.-supplied military equipment. When the Reagan administration suspected that Israel “may have violated” the terms of its aid agreement through the use of cluster munitions in Lebanon in 1982, sales of those weapons to Israel were suspended for six full years. The U.S. also suspended sales of F-15 and F-16 aircraft sales to Israel because their use to bomb an Iraqi nuclear reactor was considered a potential violation of agreements.

Are U.S.-Supplied Weapons Being Used to Commit Human Rights Violations?

Israel’s conduct during Operation Cast Lead is often cited as an example of human rights violations. After enduring years of constant rocket attacks (targeting Israeli civilians from Palestinian civilian areas), Israelis had no choice but to defend themselves. As is its practice, Israel sought to minimize civilian casualties. This included providing advance warning of maneuvers, through dropped leaflets and phone communication. It is important to remember that almost all of the Palestinian casualties were terrorists affiliated with Hamas or its affiliates or civilians who were used as human shields because weapons were fired from the areas where they lived, prayed, went to school, or sought medical care. Israel successfully did what all just countries of the world strive to do

within a self-defense operation – protect its men, women and children from terrorist attacks. This is standard procedure for Israel, a country in a difficult part of the world, surrounded by genuine security threats.

How Does the United States Benefit From its Alliance with Israel?

The United States receives a number of tangible benefits from its close partnership with Israel, such as:

- The United States has taken advantage of access to unique Israeli capabilities in key 'niche' areas of military technology and missile defense that ultimately help keep Americans safer. Israeli armor plating technology was used on U.S. military vehicles in recent conflicts, and innovative equipment, such as the specially designed “Israeli bandage” has been used to treat U.S. troops.
- The prospect of peace between Israelis and Palestinians, long a U.S. foreign policy goal, has been enhanced by U.S. aid to Israel. By keeping Israel safe and strong, such aid has helped make possible Israel's treaties with Egypt and Jordan, and the Oslo accords. Israel shares the values and security interests of the United States. U.S. military aid to Israel helps maintain equilibrium and stability in the region.
- Joint training exercises and exchanges on military doctrine help the U.S.'s military capabilities. For example, Israel's door-to-door raid techniques inspired U.S. strategic operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the first modern Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, an essential American military asset, were developed by Israel.
- The U.S. benefits from Israeli intelligence and Israel's extensive experience in counter-terrorism improves our homeland security efforts.

What is the Motivation of Critics of U.S. Military Assistance to Israel?

- Critics of U.S. aid policy often argue that U.S. foreign and military aid to Israel exacerbates tensions in the region or indirectly causes suffering to Palestinians due to their encounters with the Israeli military. As with U.S. aid to Israel's neighbors, including the Palestinians, its purpose and uses are to advance American strategic interests, including helping maintain equilibrium and stability in the region. This creates a climate of security in which the parties feel secure to advance our shared goal of two states for two peoples - a Jewish and democratic state of Israel and a sovereign state of Palestine.
- Those calling for the halt of military aid often undermine the chance for productive dialogue by engaging in inflammatory and one-sided rhetoric that paints Israel as the sole responsible party for the conflict. This approach not only isolates and demonizes the state of Israel, but also discourages the pursuit of peaceful talks.
- Critics often cite the need for increased spending on domestic priorities over military aid. The U.S. needs to invest in both domestic social and economic justice and security both foreign and domestic. The American Jewish community shares the deep concern for the domestic economic needs of the U.S. and has long fought for and supported a strong safety net for all Americans. We are eager to build broader coalitions in this area and believe we can have multiple funding priorities that are not mutually exclusive.



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