



# WHY DOES AMERICA SPEND SO MUCH ON ISRAEL?

## GENERAL CHUCK WALD

Why do we spend so much money on Israel?

Over my decades of military service, as the deputy commander of United States European Command, and now as a security advisor, I've often heard people make this complaint. The truth is we don't spend *enough*. We should spend more. And for purely selfish reasons.

Every dollar we spend on Israel is a dollar spent, in effect, in our own defense. As a value proposition, it's all in America's favor.

Let me explain, but before I do let me just say this: I can easily defend why America supports Israel on moral grounds alone. I've been there on numerous occasions. It's a good and decent country. Given the neighborhood it lives in, I find that both remarkable and admirable. But I will make this argument solely on the basis of America's security.

Our partnership with Israel is unique. Unlike most of our current treaty alliances—say, with South Korea—our ties with Jerusalem are not premised on American troops serving as tripwires on Israel's frontlines. This is because Israel takes care of itself.

America, for good reason, remains wary of any further military engagement in the Middle East. And this only strengthens the case for giving Israel the tools it needs to defend its borders.

Here are three things we can do—again, all in our own self-interest.

First, the United States should front-load its financial commitment to Israel. We have agreed to provide Israel \$38 billion in defense assistance over ten years. That's a big number, but it's also a great deal—for America.

In addition to giving Israel the financial wherewithal to purchase the weapons it needs, it also benefits the American economy. Under the agreement, Israel must spend these funds on U.S. products. And it's happy to do so. Without adding a cent to the total, the United States should “front-load” this assistance to reflect the changing strategic situation in the Middle East, specifically the rising danger presented by Iran and its proxies Hezbollah and Hamas.

An accelerated timetable would allow Israel to acquire critical capabilities like more F-35 attack squadrons, more refueling tankers and more precision munitions. It will need this hardware to defend itself and American interests against those persistent—and growing—threats.

Second, the United States should enhance our alliance with Israel. It may surprise you to

know that the United States does not have a defense treaty with this essential ally—lots of agreements, but no treaty. We should.

Why is this important? Because it will send a loud strategic signal to Israel's enemies that if you mess with Israel, you mess with us.

Israel is not going to ask us for troops. But we should be giving them anything else they need—intelligence, weapons technology and other vital information. And we know this is a two-way street. Israel gives a lot in return.

Which leads me to the third point.

The United States and Israel should build on their already close collaboration in research and development. Israel is one of the most high-tech economies in the world. American investors understand this. More venture capital is spent *per capita* in Israel than in any other country. Nine out of the ten largest companies have R&D facilities there. This is in a country of just 8 million people.

When we sell them military gear, they adapt it to their own special needs. The American military, in turn, benefits from these innovations, especially in the area of desert warfare. Indeed, President Obama's Defense Secretary, Ashton Carter, made this point: "There's no question that American lives have been saved by Israeli technology."

There are many cutting-edge projects we can work on together, such as directed-energy weapons. This new form of cannon emits highly-focused energy to neutralize targets. Such weapons will be needed to counter the spread of cheap, deadly and plentiful mortars and drones from Iran and other bad actors.

All this explains why I find it so infuriating to see Americans, especially young Americans, support anti-Israel groups like BDS—(Boycott, Divest, Sanction)—that want to weaken and destroy Israel. Putting aside the perverse logic of these groups—that we should punish a free and open democracy—it's self-destructive.

Israel is on the front line of terror. They—not us—are within missile range of Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas. To the extent these enemies of freedom are held in check, they are held in check by Israel. And they ask from us not one U.S. soldier; only for military aid, which they spend on *American* defense products to help defend *American* interests.

We should give them that aid without reservation. Sure, it costs us treasure. But it saves us blood. *Our* blood.

It's also the right thing to do.

I'm General Chuck Wald, United States Air Force, for Prager University.