

US Assistance to Israel

A Cost-Effective Way to Advance American Interests

FY 2006 foreign aid request for Israel:
\$2.52 billion
--\$2.28 billion in military aid (FMF).
--\$240 million in economic aid (ESF).

Key Points

- U.S. aid to Israel is a cost-effective tool of U.S. foreign policy that enhances American national security interests by strengthening our only democratic ally in an unstable and vital region of the world.
- American aid ensures that Israel sustains its qualitative military advantage over the combined military forces of its adversaries and helps ease Israel's enormous defense burden.
- By reinforcing Israel's deterrent capability, U.S. aid enhances the prospects for peace by making clear to Israel's would-be adversaries that there is no war alternative to negotiations.
- Beyond the direct financial benefits, the annual aid package approved by Congress signals to Israel and its adversaries that the U.S. commitment to Israel remains steadfast and unshakeable.

American aid to Israel promotes vital American security interests. Israel is a reliable, pro-American stabilizing force in an otherwise volatile, but critical region of the world. Israel stands shoulder to shoulder with the United States in countering the most dangerous threats the U.S. faces in the region, including the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by rogue regimes, and the use of terror by groups supported by these same countries to destabilize moderate regimes and disrupt peacemaking efforts. Israel has played a vital, behind the scenes role in helping U.S. forces in the region – by providing invaluable intelligence, by sharing proven military tactics faced by both armies in similar situations, and by contributing important military technologies that have played key roles in U.S. military campaigns both in Afghanistan and Iraq.

U.S. foreign assistance ensures that Israel maintains its qualitative military advantage – the key to Israel's survival and deterrent capabilities. Every American President and Congress since the 1960s have promoted the importance of maintaining Israel's qualitative edge over its potential adversaries. This policy has been the cornerstone of the unwavering U.S./Israel relationship. U.S. support helps counterbalance the 10:1 disparity in military spending by the Arab states surrounding

Israel and helps reduce the risks of war by ensuring Israel's strength against any combination of threats. Over the past decade, however, Israel's relative margin of superiority has eroded due to the increased proliferation of weapons, particularly unconventional weaponry, throughout the Middle East. In response, the Israeli military has embarked upon a ten-year modernization program, even as the country faces deep budget cuts and serious spending requirements in fighting terror. Continued and increasing U.S. security assistance is vital to helping Israel meet these growing threats and remaining strong.

U.S. foreign aid helps to provide for Israel's security. Virtually all U.S. aid to Israel – economic and military – helps Israel meet its security needs. As other countries in the region enlarge and modernize their arsenals, Foreign Military Financing (FMF) assistance gives Israel the means to obtain the increasingly expensive, advanced American weaponry that it needs to defend itself. U.S. Economic Support Funds (ESF) help Israel repay military debts it incurred to purchase U.S. equipment in the past. The request for Israel's aid is **\$2.52 billion in FY 2006** (\$2.28 billion in military aid and \$240 million in economic aid).

The annual aid package to Israel reaffirms the unshakeable U.S. commitment to Israel. Unwavering, bipartisan support for Israel has been one of the strongest, most consistent and most successful pillars of American foreign policy. Thanks to American support for the only democracy in the region, Israel has not only survived, but has come to be accepted by a growing number of her neighbors as a reality in the Middle East. By supporting aid to Israel, Congress reaffirms that the United States stands by its friends.

Beyond helping a democratic ally such as Israel, American foreign aid in general bolsters U.S. global leadership. Foreign assistance programs are cost-effective ways to advance U.S. national and security interests throughout the world which has become even more important since 9/11. At less than one percent of the federal budget, foreign aid provides the United States with the tools to pursue an active and engaged American foreign policy.