

## ***U.S. Arms Transfers and Security Assistance to Israel***

By Frida Berrigan and William Hartung

U.S. press coverage of Israeli attacks on the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian towns on the West Bank often treat the U.S. government as either an innocent bystander or an honest broker in the current conflict, often without giving a full sense of the importance of the U.S. role as a supplier of arms, aid, and military technology to Israel. In its role as Israel's primary arms supplier, the United States could exert significant potential leverage over Israeli behavior in the conflict, if it would choose to do so.

### **Military and Economic Aid**

Since 1976, Israel has been the largest annual recipient of U.S. foreign assistance.<sup>1</sup> According to a November 2001 Congressional Research Service report, *Israel: U.S. Foreign Assistance*, U.S. aid to Israel in the last half century has totaled a whopping \$81.3 billion.<sup>2</sup>

Today, Israel remains the top recipient of U.S. military and economic assistance. The most commonly cited figure is \$3 billion a year, with about \$1.8 billion a year in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) grants from the Department of Defense and an additional \$1.2 billion a year in Economic Support Funds (ESF) from the Department of State.<sup>3</sup> In the past decade FMF grants to Israel have totaled \$18.2 billion.<sup>4</sup> In fact, 17% of all U.S. foreign aid is earmarked for Israel.<sup>5</sup>

For 2003, the Bush administration is proposing that Israel receive \$2.76 billion in foreign aid, with \$2.1 billion in FMF and \$600 million in ESF.<sup>6</sup> An additional \$28 million will go to Israel for the purchase U.S. manufactured counter terrorism equipment.<sup>7</sup>

### **Weapons Sales and Grants**

Israel is one of the United States' largest arms importers. In the past decade, the United States has sold Israel \$7.2 billion in weaponry and military equipment, \$762 million through Direct Commercial Sales (DCS), more than \$6.5 billion through the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program.<sup>8</sup>

In fact, Israel is so devoted to U.S. military hardware that it has the world's largest fleet of F-16s outside the U.S., currently possessing more than 200 jets. Another 102 F-16s are on order from Lockheed Martin.<sup>9</sup>

The United States has also underwritten Israel's domestic armaments industry, by giving:

- \$1.3 billion to develop the Lavi aircraft (cancelled)
- \$625 million to develop and deploy the Arrow anti-missile missile (an ongoing project)
- \$200 million to develop the Merkava tank (operative); the latest version, the Merkava 4, uses a German V-12 diesel engine produced under license in the U.S. by General Dynamics
- \$130 million to develop the high-energy laser anti-missile system (ongoing).<sup>10</sup>

While overall aid to Israel is slated to decrease over the next five years, military aid will increase significantly. One of President Clinton's last acts was to sign an agreement with Israel, phasing out the ESF by 2008. At the same time, FMF funds to Israel will increase \$60 million each year, reaching \$2.4 billion by 2008.<sup>11</sup>



## Free Weapons to Israel

The U.S. also gives Israel weapons and ammunition as part of the Excess Defense Articles (EDA) program, providing these articles completely free of charge. Between 1994-2001 the U.S. provided many weapons through this program, including:

- 64,744 M-16A1 rifles
- 2,469 M-204 grenade launchers
- 1,500 M-2 .50 caliber machine guns
- .30 caliber, .50 caliber, and 20mm ammunition<sup>12</sup>

## Weapons that Kill

It is in the United States' national interest to promote the existence of a stable, democratic, and militarily strong Israel, at peace with its neighbors.

U.S. Department of Defense statement on Israel, in Joint Report to Congress, January 3, 2001

The scale of Israeli attacks on Palestinian towns and refugee camps in the West Bank has been "disproportionate and often reckless," according to a recent Amnesty International report.<sup>15</sup> Amnesty estimates that in the six weeks from March 1, through mid-April, more than 600 Palestinians have been killed and over 3,000 wounded by Israeli soldiers.<sup>16</sup>

The use of U.S. weapons in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian authority appears to be a clear violation of the U.S. Arms Export Control Act prohibiting U.S. weapons from being used for non-defensive purposes. The State Department's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2001*, released in March 2002, stated that the IDF employed "excessive use of force"

## U.S. Weapons in the Israeli Arsenal<sup>13</sup>

### Selected list

Weapon	Quantity	Manufacturer	Cost Per Unit
<b>Fighter Planes</b>			
F-4E Phantom	50	Boeing	\$18.4 million
F-15 Eagle	98	Boeing	\$38 million
		(originally McDonnell Douglas)	
F-16 Fighting Falcon	237	Lockheed Martin	\$34.3 million
<b>Helicopters</b>			
AH-64 Apache Attack	42	Boeing	\$14.5 million
Cobra Attack	57	Bell Textron	\$10.7 million
CH-53D Sea Stallion	38	Sikorsky	
Blackhawk	25	Sikorsky	\$11 million
<b>Missiles</b>			
AGM 65 Maverick		Raytheon	\$17,000-\$110,000
AGM 114 Hellfire		Boeing	\$40,000
TOW		Hughes	\$180,000
AIM 7 Sparrow		Raytheon	\$125,000
AIM 9 Sidewinder		Raytheon	\$84,000
AIM 120 B AMRAAM		Raytheon	\$386,000
Patriot		Raytheon and Lockheed Martin	\$83.4 million or \$600,000 <sup>14</sup>
Harpoon Anti-Ship Missile		Boeing	\$720,000

against the Palestinians, noting their use of live ammunition, even when not in imminent danger. The State Department report also stated that Israeli military "shelled Palestinian Authority (PA) institutions and Palestinian civilian areas in response to individual Palestinian attacks on Israeli civilians or settlers."<sup>17</sup> These comments demonstrate that the U.S. knows that weapons are not being used for the "legitimate defense" purposes stipulated in the Arms Export Control Act.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan recently expressed his concern with the use of U.S. weapons by the IDF, saying:

I feel obliged to call your attention to disturbing patterns in the treatment of civilians and humanitarian relief workers by the Israeli Defense Forces.... Judging from the means and methods employed by the IDF—F-16 fighter-

bombers, helicopter and naval gunships, missiles and bombs of heavy tonnage—the fighting has come to resemble all-out conventional warfare. In the process, hundreds of innocent noncombatant civilians—men, women, and children—have been injured or killed, and many buildings and homes have been damaged or destroyed. Tanks have been deployed in densely populated refugee camps and in towns and villages; and heavy explosives have been dropped mere meters from schools where thousands of children were in attendance.<sup>18</sup>

## Instances of the IDF's Use of U.S. Weapons against Civilians

Gaza, CNN, February 11, 2002

"On Sunday [February 10, 2002], Israel attacked the headquarters of

Force 17, the elite guard for Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat. Two employees of the United Nations were wounded and a UN facility was damaged in the attack, prompting condemnation of the action from UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. The UN said it was the third time the office of Terje Roed-Larsen, the UN special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, had been damaged as a result of attacks by the Israelis. The bombing also caused damage to other UN offices, including that of the representatives of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.<sup>19</sup>

**Jenin, *New York Times*, April 18, 2002**

"The decaying body of Mr. Khurj's sister appears to be one of the clearest examples to date of a civilian having been killed in an Apache helicopter missile attack. There is an enormous hole in the wall of her bedroom and a two-foot-wide crater in the floor. Shards of a missile, including one with labels in English describing "firing temperature" and "cooling temperature," littered the floor. Near the hole in the wall was a pool of dried blood. Mr. Khurj said the missile struck in the middle of the night on the third day of the attack. It killed his sister instantly."<sup>20</sup>

**Deheishe, *Washington Post*, March 10, 2002**

"Today Israeli tanks and troops invaded the other camp, Deheishe, which has a population of 8,000. Tanks and bulldozers had been positioned on a hill behind the community, and armed AH-64 Apache attack helicopters had hovered overhead. Soldiers knocked down a pedestrian bridge that led to the camp's school."<sup>21</sup>

**Bethlehem, *Washington Post*, March 8, 2002**

"The Israeli military almost immediately launched more missiles and opened fire with gunboats at official Palestinian buildings in the Gaza Strip, where there were heavy casualties. Israel also sent dozens of tanks and armored personnel carriers into Bethlehem, two adjacent Palestinian refugee camps, and a pair of neighboring West Bank towns, bringing full-scale military action to the suburbs of Jerusalem. The bark of heavy machine guns atop Israel's armored vehicles echoed throughout Bethlehem, considered the birthplace of Jesus, and U.S.-supplied AH-64 Apache helicopters fired into the Aida refugee camp between Bethlehem and Beit Jala."<sup>22</sup>

## Resources for More Information

Foreign Policy In Focus: April 2002 issue brief on U.S. Military Aid to Israel available on their web site at [www.fpif.org](http://www.fpif.org).

Arms Sales Monitoring Project, Federation of American Scientists ([www.fas.org/asmp](http://www.fas.org/asmp)) has a searchable database on U.S. arms transfers by country, plus a list of recent arms sales agreements entered into by the U.S.

*Jane's Defence Weekly* has done an Israel country briefing in its May 1, 2002 issue, containing about eight pages of analysis of current Israeli armed forces with details on key holdings. Available on the web at [www.janes.com](http://www.janes.com).

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*World Policy Institute at the New School University. Contact the project at <berrigaf@newschool.edu> or 212-229-5808 ext. 112.)*

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Clyde R. Mark, "Israel: U.S. Foreign Assistance," Congressional Research Service, November 2001.
- <sup>2</sup> Mark, Congressional Research Service, November 2001.
- <sup>3</sup> While ESF grants are ostensibly for the purpose of "economic and political stability" and are not intended for military usage, the grants allow the recipient government to free up other money, therefore providing indirect military aid.
- <sup>4</sup> "U.S. Military Aid Deliveries to Israel 1990-2001," Foreign Military Sales, Foreign Military Construction Sales and Military Assistance Facts: As of September 30, 2000.
- <sup>5</sup> Institute Index, U.S. Arms Facing SOUTH, Institute for Southern Studies, February 1, 2002.
- <sup>6</sup> State Department International Affairs (Function 150) FY2003 Budget Request.
- <sup>7</sup> "U.S. is giving Israel Another \$28 million to Fight Terror," *Jerusalem Post*, Janine Zacharia, Jan 8, 2002.
- <sup>8</sup> "U.S. Arms Deliveries to Israel 1990-2001," Foreign Military Sales, Foreign Military Construction Sales and Military Assistance Facts: As of September 30, 2000.
- <sup>9</sup> United States Aid to Israel, Snapshot of the state of Israel, *Palestine Monitor*.
- <sup>10</sup> Mark, Congressional Research Service, November 2001.

- <sup>11</sup> “US Aid to Israel to be Phased Out,” Associated Press, January 19, 2001.
- <sup>12</sup> The Excess Defense Articles Online Database, maintained by the Pentagon’s Defense Security Cooperation Agency.
- <sup>13</sup> Weapons Selected from *The Military Balance: 2001-2002*, International Institute for Strategic Studies. Cost and Manufacturer information from U.S. military factsheets, manufacturer websites and Federation of American Scientists.
- <sup>14</sup> “The Patriot Missile Failure in Dhahran: Is Software to Blame?” Shelley Toich, February 9, 1998.
- <sup>15</sup> Amnesty International, April 2002.
- <sup>16</sup> “Israel and the Occupied Territories: The Heavy Price of Israeli Incursions,” Amnesty International, April 2002.
- <sup>17</sup> “Israel and the occupied territories,” *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, Department of State, March 4, 2002.
- <sup>18</sup> “Kofi Annan’s Blunt Words Criticizing Israeli Tactics,” *New York Times*, March 19, 2002.
- <sup>19</sup> “Israel responds to Palestinian missile attack,” CNN, February 11, 2002.
- <sup>20</sup> David Rohde, “Back in Jenin, Refugees Hope to Find Survivors,” *New York Times*, April 18, 2002.
- <sup>21</sup> Daniel Williams, “Israeli Troops Turn Homes Upside Down,” *Washington Post*, March 10, 2002.
- <sup>22</sup> Lee Hockstader and Daniel Williams, “Israeli-Palestinian Bloodshed Mounts,” *Washington Post*, March 8, 2002.