

NEAR EAST REPORT

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NEWS

Senate Overwhelmingly Adopts Bill Targeting Iran's Dangerous Behavior

On June 15, the Senate overwhelmingly adopted bipartisan legislation in a 98-2 vote that would impose sanctions targeting Iran's ballistic missile program, its destabilizing actions in the Middle East, its human rights abuses, and its conventional weapons trade.

Authored by Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) Chairman Bob Corker (R-TN), Sen. Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and SFRC Ranking Member Ben Cardin (D-MD), The Countering Iran's Destabilizing Activities Act of 2017 (S.722) is directed exclusively at Iran's regional aggression, and in no way violates the letter or spirit of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

The legislation "sends a clear signal to...Iran... that our country will stand firm in the face of destabilizing behavior and that Congress will play a leading role in protecting our national interests," said Sen. Corker. "I hope the overwhelming support for this legislation can serve as an example for what can be accomplished when Republicans and Democrats work together and put the interests of the American people first."

Sen. Menendez stated that "[t]his legislation reaffirms that the United States will not turn

a blind eye to Iran's nefarious destabilizing activities throughout the Middle East including its support for terrorism and continuing tests of ballistic missiles. With Iran's influence growing ever more across the region—from its support of a Shia proxy network in Iraq, to its continued sponsorship of terrorist groups like Hezbollah and Hamas, to its abhorrent alliance with Syria and Russia, this legislation ensures the United States has a strategy in place to secure American interests in the region."

Sen. Cardin praised the legislation which also included sanctions targeting Russia. "Iran and Russia need to see more than rhetoric from the United States," he said. "The action the Senate has taken today sends a clear message to Moscow and Tehran that there will be economic, diplomatic and material consequences for their aggression toward U.S. interests, values and allies."

The bill specifically:

- Mandates sanctions on persons that engage in any activity that materially contributes to Iran's ballistic missile activity, and includes persons engaged in any efforts to manufacture, acquire, possess, develop, transport, transfer or use ballistic missiles;
- Imposes terrorism-related sanctions on Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The U.S. government has already designated the IRGC's Quds Force—the organization's foreign activities branch—as a terrorist group and has sanctioned the IRGC for non-proliferation and human rights abuses;
- Mandates sanctions on persons violating the arms embargo placed on Iran by United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231; and

- Authorizes the president to impose sanctions on Iranians responsible for human rights violations against those who seek to promote human rights or expose illegal government activity.

“This legislation will enhance our ability to hold Iran accountable, which is of great importance given Iran’s continued testing of ballistic missiles, its harassment of U.S. vessels at sea, and its support of terrorism across the region,” said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY). “At a time when we face many challenges—both at home and abroad—we must do everything we can to enable our country to counter threats where they exist and protect the American people.”

“As an original sponsor of this legislation,” said Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA), “I believe it’s imperative that we hold the Iranian regime accountable for its destabilization of the region, its support for terrorist proxies like Hezbollah and Hamas, its development of ballistic missile technology in contravention of U.N. Security Council Resolutions, and its atrocious human rights record.”

“By imposing tough sanctions on Iran for its continued support for terrorism, prohibited arms transfers, and ballistic missile testing, this legislation sends a powerful signal that our nation stands firm against Iranian aggression,” said Sen. John Thune (R-SD). “Iran is destabilizing the Middle East and this needs to stop. We need to show Israel, our closest ally that we are serious about cracking down on Iran.”

“I am glad that Congress has overwhelmingly voted to impose new sanctions on Iran,” said Sen. Gary Peters (D-MI). “For too long, Iran’s state sponsorship of terrorism and their repeated ballistic missile tests in defiance of a U.N.

Security Council Resolution have destabilized the Middle East and threatened Israel, our strongest ally in the region.”

“These new sanctions will be a strong statement by the Congress and the Trump administration—that business as usual with Iran is over,” said Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC), “I’m extremely pleased by the overwhelming bipartisan support to impose new sanctions on Iran for their destructive behavior throughout the Middle East.”

A similar piece of bipartisan legislation—The Iran Ballistic Missiles and International Sanctions Enforcement Act (H.R. 1698)—has also been introduced in the House of Representatives. Authored by House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA) and Ranking Member Eliot Engel (D-NY), the bill would place new sanctions on Iran’s illicit ballistic missile program and arms transfers.

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EDITORIAL

Congress Must Examine Impact of Saudi Arms Sale

A core element of American foreign policy is upholding Israel’s qualitative military edge (QME)—the ability of the Jewish state to counter and defeat any conventional military threat by itself, while sustaining minimal casualties and damage. To this end, America provides Israel with critical security assistance to help it deter and defend against

any potential adversary.

Today, Israel's QME is not only under pressure from Iran's expansionist aims and nuclear ambitions, but by an ongoing, massive arms build-up among Arab states as well.

On the heels of the Obama administration's 2016 announcement of significant military exports to Saudi Arabia, President Trump announced in May that the United States will sell it over \$110 billion of arms. Such an enormous quantity of defense materiel sold to a country still technically at war with Israel—despite common interests in blocking Iran's regional aggression—raises serious policy concerns, especially when it comes to the maintenance of Israel's QME and a stable Middle East military balance.



PHOTO: AP IMAGES

Congress must demand concrete assurances from the Trump administration that the arms sale to Saudi Arabia will not undermine the Israel Defense Forces' qualitative military edge.

As the Trump administration fulfills its legal obligation to submit these arms sale proposals to Capitol Hill for consideration, it is critical that Congress closely examine each component to ensure that the overall package not only

strengthens America's national security interests and economic growth, but also complies with U.S. law and does not undermine Israel's QME.

THE SCALE OF THE ARMS SALE IS UNPRECEDENTED.

While many of the details are unknown, the sale comprises the largest arms deal in American history. Initially valued at \$110 billion, overall transactions could total as much as \$350 billion over the next decade. The deal includes many items previously announced during the Obama administration.

Troublingly, the sale dwarfs Israel's own expected defense purchases from America over the same period, represented by the 10-year \$38 billion in pledged U.S. security assistance to Israel beginning in 2019. Saudi Arabia clearly intends to purchase significantly larger quantities than Israel of sophisticated U.S. systems such as the THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) missile interceptor and advanced naval vessels and vast quantities of precision munitions.

THE ARMS SALE WILL ESCALATE TODAY'S MIDDLE EAST ARMS RACE.

Without question, Iran remains the greatest threat to Israel—and the region—using its renewed access to over \$100 billion in frozen assets following the nuclear deal to help fuel its own military buildup and support for regional destabilization. As a result, the Middle East is currently witnessing a conventional arms race. This will only escalate once United Nations restrictions on Iranian arms imports lift in 2021, allowing Iran to purchase advanced, modern weaponry from Russia and China.

THE ARMS SALE COULD HARM ISRAEL'S QME.

Installation of the THAAD batteries slated for sale to Saudi Arabia may negatively impact Israel's QME. Of note, the advanced missile defense system is comparable to Israel's Arrow system. Although THAAD is intended to help Saudi Arabia defend against ballistic missiles—it would also improve the kingdom's ability to track Israeli F-15 and F-16 fighters, the workhorses of the Israeli Air Force. The stealthy F-35 fighter jet, of which five have been delivered to Israel to date, can help mitigate this operational challenge, but a future deployment of THAAD in the Arabian Peninsula increases the uncertainty of Israel's long-term QME. Furthermore, the sale makes it even more essential that Israel remains the sole foreign operator of the F-35 in the region for the foreseeable future.


TO ADDRESS THESE CONCERNS, CONGRESS MUST CLOSELY SCRUTINIZE THE DEAL.

In 2008, Congress wrote America's long-standing commitment to Israel's QME into law and required the president to continually assess whether it is being maintained. To this end, Congress must demand concrete assurances from the Trump administration that the sale will not undermine the IDF's qualitative advantage.

Specifically, Congress must:

- Ensure that Saudi capabilities are oriented toward the threats that Iran and other radical regimes pose to the Kingdom;
- Ensure the administration closely consults with Israel on the sale and takes into account its concerns—including the provision of equipment or countermeasures

necessary for Israel to maintain its QME;

- Examine what impact the sheer quantity of arms being sold to Saudi Arabia will have on Israel's QME; and
- Create a mechanism to memorialize any American or Saudi assurances associated with the sale and ensure they are adhered to. 

Ten Years On: Hamas' Gaza Strip

This summer marks the ten-year anniversary of Hamas's violent seizure of the Gaza Strip from its political rival Fatah. Hamas rule has only brought misery to Gaza, as Hamas has prioritized attacking Israel over providing for Gaza's nearly two million residents. Moreover, the terrorist group has been responsible for three wars that have brought unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and Israelis.

AFTER TEN YEARS OF HAMAS RULE, GAZA IS IN DIRE STRAITS.

Forty-two percent of the total population in Gaza—and 58 percent of youth—are unemployed. Up to 80 percent of Gazans rely on international aid for sustenance. And basic services such as the provision of electricity, water, and water treatment are wholly inadequate.

Electricity is available to the average Palestinian home for only six hours per day. "Hamas prefers its own interests and those of

its senior members,” said Israel’s Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) Maj. Gen. Yoav Mordechai. “Every tunnel in the Gaza Strip has a generator, and only after that do the people get electricity... This is a conflict between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority (PA). If Hamas decides the electricity will go to hospitals and civilians instead of Hamas members and [Hamas leader in Gaza] Yahya Sinwar, the public in the Gaza Strip won’t have a problem.”

Also, over-pumping of limited natural water sources has rendered 95 percent of Gaza’s tap water undrinkable. Concerning wastewater, the existing treatment plants lack capacity to treat all of the produced wastewater, causing severe water pollution. These shortfalls are only exacerbated by intra-Palestinian struggles and Hamas’ refusal to pay for utilities.

FOLLOWING ISRAEL’S DISENGAGEMENT, HAMAS VIOLENTLY SEIZED CONTROL.

Gaza’s travail was not preordained. Gazans could have enjoyed an improved economy and peace with Israel. But their leadership chose otherwise.

In a gesture of peace, in August 2005, Israel disengaged from the Gaza Strip and allowed the PA to assume administrative control. Israel evacuated all 8,000 Israeli citizens as well as Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers. This provided Palestinians a great opportunity to produce their own “Singapore” in the Middle East. But in January 2006, Hamas won a resounding victory in legislative elections, and subsequently formed the Palestinian Authority government in the West Bank and Gaza.

The United States, Israel, and European Union offered Hamas the opportunity to gain

acceptance by agreeing to recognize Israel, respect previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements, and quit violence. Hamas refused. And five months after the election, Hamas terrorists crossed the border into Israel and kidnapped IDF soldier Gilad Shalit, whom Hamas held in captivity for five years.

While Fatah initially refused to cooperate with the Hamas-led government, it ultimately joined the terrorist group in a unity government in March 2007. But relations worsened and violence between the two sides broke out in June 2007. Hamas ultimately succeeded in evicting Fatah from Gaza following a battle that left 161 Palestinians dead and over 700 wounded. In a brutal display of violence, Hamas militants threw Fatah members off rooftops and executed others in the streets.



PHOTO: AP IMAGES

Hamas rule has only brought suffering to Gaza, as Hamas has prioritized attacking Israel over providing for Gaza’s nearly two million residents.

HAMAS MILITARIZES GAZA.

Since seizing power, Hamas has actively bolstered its fighting force—it spends hundreds of millions of dollars annually on this effort—to prepare for conflict with Israel.

Hamas has provoked three separate rounds of prolonged fighting with Israel—in 2008-2009, 2012 and 2014.

These conflicts have resulted in hundreds of Israeli casualties, thousands of Palestinian casualties, and many billions of dollars in damage to Gaza's infrastructure. Hamas persists in behavior deleterious to the Palestinian people, diverting hundreds of thousands of tons of cement meant for civilian reconstruction in order to build terror tunnels and other military infrastructure. Indeed, Israel estimates that Hamas steals as much as 95 percent of all cement entering Gaza, some of which goes to fortify six miles of new tunnels dug each month.

HAMAS USES GAZANS AS HUMAN SHIELDS.

The use of human shields is a practice commonly employed by Hamas. During Operation Protective Edge in 2014, the group used the Shifa hospital in Gaza City as its military command center; turned the Shuja'iya neighborhood in Gaza City into a terrorist fortress; indiscriminately launched rockets at Israeli cities and towns from within Palestinian population centers; and ordered Palestinian civilians to act as human shields for weapons depots and launch sites. And on numerous occasions, missiles were discovered in schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Most recently, UNRWA workers in Gaza discovered on June 1 a Hamas-dug tunnel under a boys' elementary school in Deir al-Balah.

HAMAS RULES WITH AN IRON FIST.


Given Hamas' demonstrated lack of empathy for human life, its repressive and draconian style of rule should not be surprising. Human Rights Watch has accused Hamas of using conflict

with Israel as cover for eliminating its political rivals. In May 2015, Amnesty International reported that in 2014, Hamas tortured and summarily executed Gazans whom it believed were collaborating with Israel. Sham trials and executions have been normal Hamas practice over the past decade. In August 2016, Amnesty also accused Hamas of abusing journalists and activists in order to intimidate opponents.

Gazans also suffer from all the restrictions of a classic authoritarian government. They cannot exercise individual liberties such as the right to freely assemble or express themselves through a free press or free speech.

ISRAEL CONTINUES TO TAKE STEPS TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF GAZA'S RESIDENTS.

Despite the threat it faces from Hamas, COGAT permits the transport of approximately 850 truckloads of goods into Gaza every day. On a typical day, five ambulances, 612 individuals and more than 27,000 tons of goods cross the Israel-Gaza border. Gaza's exports also doubled in 2016 compared to the previous year with Israel's facilitation. In addition, in March 2017 the Jewish state facilitated the transfer of \$82 million to Gaza to pay the salaries of PA employees. On May 3, Israel also expanded Gaza's fishing zone off part of Gaza's coast from six to nine nautical miles.

Ten years on, Hamas remains committed to the destruction of Israel regardless of the cost to the Palestinian people it claims to serve. 

Ambassador Haley Stands with Israel

Since taking office in January, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations (U.N.) Nikki Haley has strongly supported American values and stood by Israel. She has embraced her essential roles of combating rampant anti-Israel bias and deepening the U.S.-Israel alliance. Earlier this month, she met with Israeli leaders in Jerusalem to discuss America's and Israel's strategy at the U.N. Her efforts underscore the important role she is playing in deepening the U.S.-Israel relationship and speaking out against rampant anti-Israel bias in the international arena.

AMBASSADOR HALEY HAS URGED THE U.N. TO END ITS "CHRONIC ANTI-ISRAEL BIAS."

The U.N. Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is one of the most hostile, anti-Israel organs in the U.N. system. As serious human rights crises unfold around the world—especially in Syria and the broader Middle East—the UNHRC remains disproportionately focused on criticizing Israel.

On June 6, one day prior to arriving in Israel, Ambassador Haley urged the UNHRC to end its one-sided, anti-Israel behavior in remarks at the opening of the body's 35th session in Geneva. "It is essential that this council address its chronic anti-Israel bias if it is to have any credibility," she said.

Later that day at the Graduate Institute of Geneva, Haley called for the removal of the UNHRC's "scandalous provision" known as

Agenda Item Seven—the clearest manifestation of the Council's anti-Israel bias. Agenda Item Seven is the only country-specific item on the UNHRC's standing agenda, requiring that Israel's human rights record be debated at every Council session and ensuring that the Jewish state is singled out with automatic criticism at every meeting.



PHOTO: AP IMAGES

Ambassador Haley continues to speak truth to power, standing up for the Jewish state in the international arena. Her leadership underscores her commitment to a robust U.S.-Israel relationship.

She continued: "Since its creation [in 2006], the Council has passed more than 70 resolutions targeting Israel. It has passed just seven on Iran. This relentless, pathological campaign against a country that actually has a strong human rights record makes a mockery not of Israel, but of the Council itself. The Council's effort to create a database designed to shame companies for doing business in Israeli-controlled areas is just the latest in this long line of shameful actions."

On June 14, Haley condemned a report released by the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights that unfairly singled out Israel. "This report is just the latest example of the Human Rights Council singling out Israel rather than focusing on the world's actual human rights

abusers,” she said. “Not only does it undermine the credibility of the Human Rights Council on human rights issues, but it once again highlights the unfair bias of the U.N. when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

These comments echo previous statements Haley made on April 20 at a U.N. Security Council meeting. “Every month, the Security Council convenes a meeting on the Middle East,” said Haley. “Regrettably, these monthly meetings routinely turn into Israel-bashing sessions. That’s the way the Security Council has operated for years. It’s a formula that is absurdly biased against one country. It’s a formula that is painfully narrow in its description of the conflicts in the region.”

Ambassador Haley has taken steps to turn her words into action. In March, she demanded that the U.N. retract a new report that viciously and outrageously attacked Israel as an apartheid state. In response, the secretary-general deleted the report from the U.N.’s webpage.

In her June 6 remarks in Geneva, Haley also warned that when “the Council fails to act properly—when it fails to act at all—it undermines its own credibility, and the cause of human rights;” it only re-enforces “our growing suspicion that the Human Rights Council is not a good investment of our time, money, and national prestige.”

AMBASSADOR HALEY’S TRIP REINFORCES THE ROBUST U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP.

In a June 7 meeting in Jerusalem with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Ambassador Haley labeled the U.N. a “bully” that singles out Israel simply because it can. She noted, however, that this one-sided treatment is beginning to change. “We’re starting to see

a turn in New York. I think they know they can’t keep responding in the way they’ve been responding,” she said, referring to the countries that routinely bash Israel.

“They sense that the tone has changed,” she continued. “We were talking with some ambassadors in Geneva that are all on the Human Rights Council, and we talked to them about Agenda Item Seven. Some of them were embarrassed by it. They acknowledge the fact that it just makes no sense.”

Haley echoed this sentiment in a meeting later that day with President Reuven Rivlin. “I have never taken kindly to bullies and the U.N. has bullied Israel for a very long time and we are not going to let that happen anymore,” she said.

Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Rivlin praised and thanked Haley for her leadership in the international arena in defense of Israel.

“Thank you for all your help and standing up for Israel, standing up for the truth,” Netanyahu said.

“You are a dear friend of Israel,” Rivlin told Haley. “We appreciate your strong stand on the world’s most important stage in support of the security of the people and the State of Israel. With your support, we see the beginning of a new era. Israel is no longer alone at the U.N. Israel is no longer the U.N.’s punching bag.”

On June 8, Haley visited an Israeli community on the Gaza border to talk to residents about their experiences living near the Hamas-ruled strip. She also toured a Hamas-built “terror” tunnel and the Kerem Shalom border crossing, through which most goods are transferred between Israel and the coastal enclave.

Ambassador Haley continues to speak truth to power, standing up for the Jewish state in the international arena. Her leadership underscores her commitment to a robust U.S.-Israel relationship. Together, America and Israel face numerous shared challenges. But building closer strategic, economic, political and diplomatic ties will help them further U.S. interests, promote regional peace and enhance the security and safety of both nations.



In Memoriam: Lonny Kaplan

On June 3, former AIPAC president and champion of the U.S.-Israel relationship Lionel (Lonny) Kaplan passed away at the age of 69.

Kaplan began his involvement as an AIPAC activist in 1988 as co-chair of the Princeton, New Jersey chapter with his wife Gail. He later served as member of the Princeton area's executive committee and the New York regional council before undertaking his first national position at AIPAC as development chair in 1994. He went on to serve as AIPAC's president in 1998-2000 and then as chairman of the board.

Lonny's commitment to the pro-Israel cause motivated and inspired all who worked with him. In the halls of Congress, Lonny was well known by senators and congressmen from both parties as a persuasive and effective pro-Israel activist. He would always go the extra mile, make the additional phone call and take

yet another meeting to further the alliance between America and the Jewish state. His effective leadership helped grow and expand the influence of our movement.

Born in New Jersey, Kaplan was known for his kindness, passion and strength. During his college years at Harvard University, he played varsity football with actor Tommy Lee Jones—who subsequently introduced Kaplan to his roommate, the future Vice President Al Gore. Kaplan continued his friendship with Gore for decades thereafter.



PHOTO: AIPAC

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“Lonny Kaplan was revered for his dedication to promoting the relationship between the United States and Israel and supporting the American Jewish community,” said Gore. “I cherished our close personal friendship, which dates back to our time as college classmates. All of us who were privileged to be friends with Lonny will deeply miss him.”

Lonny later received his law degree from Rutgers University and became the managing

partner of Joseph D. Kaplan and Son, a law firm founded in 1939 by his grandfather.

With his extraordinary dedication and indefatigable spirit, Kaplan played a major role in deepening the U.S.-Israel relationship. In the process, he built strong bonds with political figures in Congress and other key decision-makers, including former Vice President Joe Biden, Sen. Bob Menendez (D-NJ), and former Sens. Rick Santorum (R-PA) and Joe Lieberman (I-CT).

“Lonny Kaplan was a very passionate supporter of Israel and a very effective advocate of a strong U.S.-Israel relationship,” said Lieberman. “Personally, I could not have asked for a better friend or more steadfast supporter than Lonny. I will miss him and always be grateful to him.”

Speaking at his funeral, Sen. Menendez hailed Kaplan as “a man who lived the life he wanted to live, with passion and conviction, humility and loyalty, and a dedication to the causes he believed in.”

“He was a very close friend from my first days in office until his final days, a true defender of the U.S.-Israel relationship and a true believer in the promise of America. He loved his family immensely, and loved life to its fullest. I will miss him tremendously,” said Sen. Menendez.

AIPAC Chief Executive Office Howard Kohr hailed him as a “force of nature.”

“He was a truly revered and transformational leader, and AIPAC grew tremendously under his presidency,” said Kohr. “He was 49 when he became president and led a younger generation of lay leadership.”

Vice Chief Executive Officer Richard Fishman said he had “led by example” and “would travel across the country” to support AIPAC’s mission.

“He was one of the nicest people you would ever meet, and he always wanted his fellow board members to succeed. Future AIPAC presidents would come to him for advice,” said Fishman.

Former AIPAC president Amy Friedkin and Kaplan worked closely together as the two became more deeply involved in pro-Israel activism at AIPAC.

“I would say that in one word, Lonny was fearless. Also, strong, persistent, single-focused,” said Friedkin. “I learned from Lonny that ‘you never get, if you don’t ask.’ He taught me to assert myself, ask for what I want, and ‘just go do it.’ He was a consummate political animal. He had such strong relationships with pro-Israel elected officials. He was a loyal friend, above all. Being about the same age, we shared ‘60s music. This California Girl will miss her Jersey Boy friend.”

AIPAC board member and *Let There Be Water* author Seth Siegel also praised Kaplan’s political contributions, stating that the “passing of Lonny Kaplan, former president of AIPAC, is a great loss for the pro-Israel movement. He taught and inspired so many of us.”

Lonny is survived by his wife, Gail; his brothers Robert and Richard; his daughter Shana and son-in-law Josh; his three granddaughters, Hannah, Ellie and Eva; and his countless friends and fellow activists.

May his memory be a blessing.  AIPAC

Interview with Tammam Stein: Author of *The Six- Day Hero*

Just in time for the 50th anniversary of the Six-Day War, a new historical novel sensitively and accurately portrays the precarious experience of ordinary Israelis living through 1967. This fast-paced, delightful read is a great way for all ages to learn about the Six-Day War.

Though much has been written for adults, *The Six-Day Hero* by acclaimed novelist Tammam Stein is the only book about the events of 1967 written for children. It tells the story of Motti, a 12-year-old Jewish boy living in West Jerusalem who idolizes his big brother, a soldier in the Israeli Defense Forces. Motti dreams of being a hero like him one day. As tensions rise and the war draws near, Motti realizes not all heroes wear uniforms. Stein joins *Near East Report* to discuss her novel.

Q: What has been the reaction to your book?

A: I've received amazing feedback from readers—eight- to-13-year-olds as well as parents and grandparents who tell me that reading the book helped them absorb the texture and emotion of the period. Even adults who have read definitive accounts, like Michael Oren's *Six Days of War* or Yossi Klein Halevi's *Like Dreamers*, share that they hadn't fully grasped the effect of the war on Israel's citizens. Reading the day-to-day experiences of a boy trying to live an ordinary life in extraordinary

times illuminates how Israelis struggled with suspense, despair and fierce hope.

Q: Your book is described as a “wonderfully told, impeccably researched tale” by *Hadassah* magazine. How did you get the details right?

A: At first I thought it was a simple story. The war lasted six days. Israel won. Not much left to say. But as I started interviewing Israelis who had lived through it, I realized there was so much more to say.

In addition to researching academic and primary sources, I spoke with many Israeli soldiers and civilians to understand the range of emotions preceding, during and after the war. Because of the national draft, everyone of a certain age was personally touched, either as an activated soldier or as a relative of one. In fact, my own father was an 18-year-old Israeli soldier in the Six-Day War.



Leading up to the war, I learned that Israelis really thought they were going to be annihilated. Israeli newspapers were using words like: *Holocaust* and *catastrophic* and *existential threat*. I also heard how Israel's economy nearly fell apart due to the widespread activation, and I picked up wonderful anecdotes like how high school students stepped up to deliver the mail. There was such spirit, in some places the mail was delivered twice a day!

Then afterwards, to win so completely, to unify Jerusalem for the first time in 2000 years...I heard that it felt like a bigger miracle than Hanukkah and Purim put together. Some Holocaust survivors said that they finally forgave God—they saw He hadn't abandoned them after all.

Q: The Six-Day War took place before you were born. How did you become interested in writing about it?

A: My mother's rabbi shared with her that he had nothing to assign fifth graders about modern Israeli history. My mom followed this up with career advice to me: "You should write something."

I kept thinking about this. Nothing about Israel for fifth graders? Really? I spent part of my childhood in Israel, and I relished the idea of sharing Israeli life and culture with my readers—like how neighbors look after each other and the deep desire for peace. The world is so quick to criticize Israel, but it's essential that children are taught about the many positives of this extraordinary little nation.

In fact, American Jewish educators have already reached out to me in gratitude for the book. Many are struggling with how to teach about Israel—how to contextualize how Israel

came to face the challenges it faces today. Israel is so strong now, it is hard to impart to students that in 1967 Israel was surrounded by overwhelming armies and Jerusalemites were shelled relentlessly by Jordan. Through reading Motti's story, the reader learns that Israel didn't want war, it repeatedly tried to avert it, and the war itself was very difficult.

Q: How did you make a book about war appropriate for children?



A: I have two children myself, and of course they hear about Israel in the headlines. In general, children are aware of conflict in the world, but they lack the context to understand it.

By focusing on the war from the perspective of 12-year-old Motti, I could shape the language and dialogue of the book to be light-hearted, humorous and optimistic. I am hopeful that my book will help children appreciate and understand this key moment in Israel's history through a friendly, relatable character.



Washington Brief: A Recap of News From the Hill and Beyond

SENATE UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTS RESOLUTION COMMEMORATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF JERUSALEM'S REUNIFICATION

On June 5, the Senate unanimously approved in a 90-0 vote S. Res. 176, a bipartisan resolution commemorating the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem.

Authored by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Democratic Leader Charles Schumer (D-NY), the bipartisan measure recognizes that “there has been a continuous Jewish presence in Jerusalem for 3 millennia” and hails Jerusalem as a “united city in which the rights of all faiths have been respected and protected” since 1967.

“While we know that Israel continues to face a number of threats, bipartisan passage of this resolution will serve as yet another indication of the United States’ commitment to standing by our Israeli friends,” said Sen. McConnell.

“It is very fitting that the Senate passed this resolution 50 years to the day of the start of the Six-Day War,” said Sen. Schumer. “I was proud to sponsor this resolution, which reaffirms the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995 that states Jerusalem should remain an undivided city and Israel’s capital—in which the rights of every ethnic and religious group are celebrated, valued and protected.”

June 5 marked the 50-year anniversary of the beginning of the Six-Day War. This war of Israeli self-defense resulted in Jerusalem’s reunification. From 1948 to 1967, Israeli citizens of all religious backgrounds and Jewish people of all nationalities could not access Jerusalem’s Old City and holy sites. After the Six-Day War, Israel immediately eliminated constraints on the free exercise of religion, and supported access of Jews, Christians and Muslims to worship in Jerusalem, a practice which continues today.

TREASURY SANCTIONS SEVEN INDIVIDUALS, ENTITIES LINKED TO IRAN'S BALLISTIC MISSILE PROGRAM

On May 17, the U.S. Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned seven individuals and entities for supporting Iran’s ballistic missile program.

Specifically, OFAC designated Morteza Farasatpour and Rahim Ahmadi, two senior Iranian defense officials; the China-based Ruan Runling Network and three associated companies; and the Iran-based company Matin Sanat Nik Andishan. Farasatpour was also found to have coordinated the sale and delivery of explosives to the Assad regime in Syria.

“This Administration is committed to countering Iran’s destabilizing behavior, such as Iran’s development of ballistic missiles and support to the Assad regime. It is alarming that individuals involved with Iran’s missile program are assisting the brutal Assad regime, and we are taking action to curtail this behavior,” said Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin.

“These sanctions target Iranian officials as well as a China-based network that are providing

support to Syria and supplying items to further Iran's ballistic weapons program. The United States will remain vigilant when it comes to Iran."

OFAC's action was made in conjunction with the State Department's release of the semi-annual report issued to Congress that details sanctions imposed on individuals and entities involved in human rights abuses in Iran.

"Iran has compiled one of the world's most egregious records on human rights since the founding of the Islamic Republic in 1979, and its conduct has only grown worse in recent years," said the State Department. "Addressing Iran's continued human rights violations and abuses remains a high priority for the U.S. government...[W]e will continue to work with authorities granted by Congress as well as use existing executive orders to sanction persons involved in abuses of human rights in Iran."

U.S. AUTHORITIES ARREST TWO HEZBOLLAH OPERATIVES PLOTTING AGAINST AMERICAN AND ISRAEL TARGETS

On June 8, the U.S. Department of Justice announced the arrest of two men on charges related to their alleged involvement in activities on behalf of the Iranian-backed terrorist organization Hezbollah.

Ali Kourani was arrested in the Bronx, New York on June 1 for providing material support to Hezbollah and receiving military-type training from the terrorist group. He is also charged on a related weapons offense that involves a rocket-propelled grenade launcher and machine guns. In 2000, Kourani began attending Hezbollah-sponsored weapons training in Lebanon.

Following the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war, he

was recruited by the Iranian proxy to carry out activities in the United States. These actions included identifying individuals affiliated with the Israel Defense Forces, gathering information regarding security at U.S. airports, and surveilling U.S. military and law enforcement facilities in New York City.

Samer El-Debek was also arrested on June 1, near Detroit, Michigan. Hezbollah allegedly recruited him in late 2007 or early 2008. He was paid by the group approximately through 2015 and received extensive military training, including "various weapons, surveillance and counter-surveillance techniques, and the creation and handling of explosives and explosive devices." According to the FBI, he possesses a "high degree of technical sophistication" in explosives.

El-Debek traveled on behalf of Hezbollah in 2011 to Panama, where he was tasked with "locating the U.S. and Israeli Embassies, casing security procedures at the Panama Canal and the Israeli Embassy, and locating hardware stores where explosive precursors could be purchased."

"The charges announced today reveal once again that the New York City region remains a focus of many adversaries, demonstrated as alleged in this instance by followers of a sophisticated and determined organization with a long history of coordinating violent activities on behalf of Hezbollah," said FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge William F. Sweeney Jr. "Our announcement today also reveals, however, that the dozens of agencies working together with our FBI [Joint Terrorism Task Forces] nationwide are just as determined to disrupt the plans of those working to harm our communities."

Hezbollah has been designated as a U.S. terrorist organization since 1995. The group has killed more Americans than any terrorist group other than al-Qaida.

TOP PENTAGON OFFICIALS PRAISE U.S.-ISRAEL DEFENSE COOPERATION AT KEY HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING

On June 7, top American defense officials praised U.S.-Israel missile defense collaboration at a House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces hearing on Fiscal Year 2018 priorities.

Vice Adm. James Syring, the director of the Missile Defense Agency, stated that the United States is “close partners with Israel on development of their systems, system engineering in particular and testing.”

“I’ve been intimately involved with them on David’s Sling, Arrow, [and] the more recent version of Arrow-3,” said Syring at the hearing. “Frankly that interceptor is now up into the exo-atmosphere, and it has significant range constraints within the Mediterranean, and one of the better places to test is in Alaska from Kodiak and we plan to do that next year.”

Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities Thomas Harvey hailed U.S. missile defense collaboration with Israel as “a bilateral success story.”

“The jointly developed Arrow and David’s Sling weapon system programs provide Israel with the capability to defend itself against imminent and emerging ballistic missile threats while benefitting the United States through technology sharing,” said Harvey. “Operationally, missile defense is also the

central focus of the JUNIPER COBRA exercise series—an important U.S.-Israeli military exercise that allows us to work through key interoperability challenges in responding to a potential missile crisis involving Israel.”

Harvey also discussed the significance of the 10-year, \$38 billion Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two nations, which includes an annual commitment of \$500 million for missile defense cooperation beginning in Fiscal Year 2019.

“The intent of the multi-year commitment in the MOU is to facilitate Israel’s long-term budget planning and to ensure U.S. budget predictability in supporting Israel’s missile defense development and production requirements,” said Harvey. “Although U.S. industry receives meaningful workshare through participation in Israeli ballistic missile defense programs, we must also ensure U.S. missile defense requirements receive sufficient funding.”

STATE DEPARTMENT DESIGNATES HEZBOLLAH, ISIS LEADERS

On May 19, the U.S. State Department designated as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGT) Hashem Safieddine, a senior Hezbollah leader, as well as Muhammad al-Isawi, leader of the Islamic State’s (ISIS) Sinai affiliate. Saudi Arabia joined the United States in designating Safieddine.

“Today’s actions notify the U.S. public and the international community that Safieddine and al-Isawi pose a serious risk of committing acts of terrorism that threaten the national security and foreign policy of the United States,” stated the report. “The action against Safieddine is the latest example of the strong partnership

between the United States and Saudi Arabia in combatting the financing of terrorism. The Safieddine designation is also consistent with the U.S. government’s ongoing effort to expose and apply pressure against the actions of Hezbollah, which is supported by the foremost State Sponsor of Terrorism, Iran.”

As a result of these designations, all U.S. property and interests subject to these individuals are blocked, and U.S. persons are generally prohibited from engaging in transactions with them. Safieddine’s assets are similarly frozen in Saudi Arabia.  AIPAC