



Obama Seeks \$205 Million for Israel's Defense

CNN reported May 14 that “the White House is asking Congress to approve \$205 million to help Israel build a new short-range rocket defense system” called the Iron Dome that is “designed to intercept incoming rockets fired from Lebanon and Gaza.” The security system “addresses Israelis’ worries about errant rockets being fired into their homes,” CNN quoted a senior Obama administration official as saying.

Asked why the U.S. government is using taxpayer dollars to fund Israel’s defense, White House spokesman Tommy Vietor explained, “As the president has repeatedly said, our commitment to Israel’s security is unshakable, and our defense relationship is stronger than ever. The United States and our ally Israel share many of the same security challenges, from combating terrorism to confronting the threat posed by Iran’s nuclear-weapons program.”

Israel, of course, already receives \$3 billion annually from the United States. Its not terribly friendly neighbors, the Palestinians and the Egyptians, each get hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars each year from U.S. taxpayers, while other countries in the region get lesser, but still significant, amounts. None of these checks is, as one might expect, being given out of the goodness of Uncle Sam’s heart with no strings attached. On the contrary, he who pays the piper calls the tune, and Uncle Sam has been tying up the request hotline for decades.

As the CNN report notes, “The [Obama] administration is continuing to nudge Israel to resume talks with the Palestinians.” If the Israelis thought it was in their best interest to negotiate, they would probably do so without prodding from Washington. Perhaps it is in their best interest but, for whatever reason, they are choosing not to negotiate. In any case, regardless of their motives, it ought to be their business alone. The U.S. government gives them money in hopes of “nudging” them in the direction our leaders want them to go; and by accepting the money and then asking for more, the Israelis are, at least implicitly, accepting the terms of the bargain.

Meanwhile, our government has been doling out cash to Egypt and the Palestinians in an attempt to buy peace for Israel and to achieve other objectives desired by Washington.

Egypt got on the foreign aid gravy train in 1975 but, as [USAID explains](#), “USAID assistance really took off after 1979 when” Egypt and Israel signed the Camp David Accords, and as of 2005 Egypt had received \$28 billion in total U.S. development aid, “by far the largest amount of development aid given to any country in the world by the United States.” Not surprisingly, most of this money has not gone to the Egyptian people, whom it is ostensibly to help, but to the repressive Egyptian government. As Ahmad Al-Sayed El-Naggar [wrote](#) in a web commentary for the Carnegie Endowment for Peace:

As for U.S. security and military aid to Egypt, which is about \$1.3 billion annually, it ... is devoted mainly to strengthening the regime’s domestic security and its ability to confront popular movements. This hardly enhances USAID’s popularity among the Egyptian people or educated elites....



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on May 18, 2010

The conditions tied to U.S. aid ensure that much of the money returns to the United States, whether in the form of the imported American products, work contracts that go to American companies at less competitive prices than Egypt could have obtained had the bidding been open to international companies, or the salaries of USAID experts. Most important of all, this aid consolidated a gross imbalance in trade relations between Egypt and the U.S.

Aid to the Palestinians, which currently averages about [\\$400 million annually](#), also frequently goes to less than savory causes. The U.S. government may, for example, think it is training the Palestinian military to serve as a defensive force for a future Palestinian state, but that training can be used for nefarious purposes as well, as [this TNA article](#) demonstrates.

The United States has been aiding, unconstitutionally and at taxpayer expense, both Israel and its enemies for decades. The result has been to achieve for Israel a somewhat tenuous, albeit enduring, peace with Egypt and a standoff (with occasional bouts of terrorism) with the Palestinians, all at the expense of each people's independence and, often, the lives and liberties of its citizens. Funding both sides of a conflict wasn't a good idea when Ronald Reagan tried it back in the 1980s, selling arms to both Iraq and Iran when they were at war, and it isn't a good idea now. Let Americans keep their hard-earned money, and let the people involved in conflicts in other lands decide their own fate.

Let us heed the advice of the Founding Fathers and avoid entangling alliances, both for the sake of those our government is supposedly helping and for the sake of Americans who get caught in the blowback from the U.S. government's "help." In the words of George Washington, "nothing is more essential than that permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular nations, and passionate attachments for others, should be excluded; and that, in place of them, just and amicable feelings towards all should be cultivated."

Photo of test-firing of Iron Dome rocket: AP Images

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