

April 21, 2016

The Honorable President Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We commend you for your continued work on negotiating a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for security assistance to Israel. In light of Israel's dramatically rising defense challenges, we stand ready to support a substantially enhanced new long-term agreement to help provide Israel the resources it requires to defend itself and preserve its qualitative military edge. As you know, a strong and secure Israel remains a central pillar of our national strategy to achieve peace and stability in the Middle East. Israel remains America's strongest ally in this troubled region.

Unfortunately, Israel faces a variety of threats which require increasing the resources devoted to its defense. Hezbollah has positioned up to 150,000 rockets and missiles to Israel's north, and promises to attack at a time of its choosing. Disorder in Syria has spawned multiple terrorist groups dedicated to Israel's destruction, including affiliates of al Qaeda and ISIS. Iran's intervention in Syria has brought the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps and Shi'ite militias near Israel's border. In the south, Hamas has grown its rocket and missile inventory and is actively rebuilding tunnels to attack Israel. The Sinai has become a lawless haven for militant Islamist groups. Iran is actively helping most of these groups, in addition to illicitly testing sophisticated ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads. Earlier this month, two such weapons were launched bearing the ominous words in Hebrew: "*Israel should be wiped out.*"

In addition to these immediate threats, Israel must take into account the possibility that regional instability could lead to toppling of one or more of America's friends. Given the extraordinary levels of weapons pouring into in the Middle East, Israel could quickly find itself on the wrong end of the regional military balance. This problem is compounded by the mounting cost of the new aircraft and other weapons systems that Israel must acquire to keep pace with its neighbors. Moreover, Israel must prepare for the likelihood that Iran will resume its quest for nuclear weapons.

Members of Congress from both parties have been proud to work with you and previous administrations to provide Israel the essential resources it needs to survive in a very tough neighborhood. The nature and breadth of the current threats, however, mean that the United States must enhance its investment in the long-term security requirements of our closest Middle East ally. Already this year, we intend to consider increasing U.S. funding in FY17 for cooperative missile defense programs, much as we have done over the past several years. Most importantly, we urge you to conclude an agreement with Israel for a robust new MOU that increases aid while retaining the current terms of our existing aid program. That MOU should pledge aid at a level that will enable Israel to combine our assistance with its own increased defense budget to meet its essential defense needs over the coming decade. We look forward to working with you on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

Lindsey O. Graham
United States Senator

Lamar Alexander
United States Senator

Kelley Ayotte
United States Senator

John Barrasso
United States Senator

Michael Bennet
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Roy Blunt
United States Senator

Cory Booker
United States Senator

John Boozman
United States Senator

Richard Burr
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

Shelley Capito
United States Senator

Benjamin Cardin
United States Senator

Robert Casey
United States Senator

Bill Cassidy
United States Senator

Daniel Coats
United States Senator

Thad Cochran
United States Senator

Susan Collins
United States Senator

John Cornyn
United States Senator

Tom Cotton
United States Senator

Michael Crapo
United States Senator

Ted Cruz
United States Senator

Steve Daines
United States Senator

Joe Donnelly
United States Senator

Richard Durbin
United States Senator

Michael Enzi
United States Senator

Joni Ernst
United States Senator

Deb Fischer
United States Senator

Jeff Flake
United States Senator

Jeff Flake
United States Senator

Cory Gardner
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Chuck Grassley
United States Senator

Orrin Hatch
United States Senator

Heidi Heitkamp
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

Dean Heller
United States Senator

Mazie Hirono
United States Senator

John Hoeven
United States Senator

Jim Inhofe
United States Senator

Johnny Isakson
United States Senator

Ron Johnson
United States Senator

Mark Kirk
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

James Lankford
United States Senator

Mike Lee
United States Senator

Joe Manchin
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

John McCain
United States Senator

Mitch McConnell
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Jeff Merkley
United States Senator

Barbara Mikulski
United States Senator

Jerry Moran
United States Senator

Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

Patty Murray
United States Senator

Bill Nelson
United States Senator

David Perdue
United States Senator

Gary Peters
United States Senator

Robert Portman
United States Senator

Harry Reid
United States Senator

James Risch
United States Senator

Pat Roberts
United States Senator

M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator

Marco Rubio
United States Senator

Ben Sasse
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Charles Schumer
United States Senator

Tim Scott
United States Senator

Richard Shelby
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Dan Sullivan
United States Senator

John Thune
United States Senator

Thom Tillis
United States Senator

Pat Toomey
United States Senator

David Vitter
United States Senator

Mark Warner
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Roger Wicker
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator