

\$2.775 billion in US aid supports Israeli nuclear weapons program

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President Barak Obama's fiscal year 2010 budget request for \$2.775 billion in military aid to Israel is proceeding smoothly through the Congress.

On June 17, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs held a "mark-up" session on the budget. The subcommittee came under pressure from an antiwar group that sought to suspend or condition foreign aid over Israel's use of US weapons which left 3000 Palestinians dead during the Bush administration. The subcommittee held its session in [a tiny Capitol room](#) denying activists and members of the press access. The budget quickly passed and is now before the full House Appropriations Committee.

Israel enjoys "unusually wide latitude in spending the [military assistance] funds," according to the Wall Street Journal.

Unlike other recipients that must go through the Pentagon, Israel deals directly with US military contractors for almost all of its purchases. This gives the US based Israel lobby, particularly the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), an influence multiplier on Capitol Hill. Large contractors proactively segment military contracts across key congressional districts to make them harder to oppose. As contractors and local business interests fight for Israel's favor, AIPAC can turn away from shepherding the massive aid package to dedicate considerable resources toward Iran sanctions.

Representative Mark Steven Kirk (R-Illinois) [sponsored an amendment](#) to the foreign operations bill that would prevent the Export-Import Bank of the United States from providing loan guarantees to companies selling refined petroleum to Iran. According to the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, Kirk is the top 2008 recipient of [Israel political action committee \(PAC\) contributions](#) (PDF). Kirk received \$91,200 in the 2008 election cycle and more than \$221,000 over his career.

Kirk's AIPAC sponsored sanctions legislation passed the House Appropriations Committee on June 23. While tactically positioned as a rebuke to the crackdown on Iranian election protesters, the measure is only the most recent of strategic long-term [AIPAC sponsored sanctions](#) against Iran's nuclear program.

Israel contends Iran is secretly developing nuclear weapons under the auspices of a civilian program, though no hard evidence has emerged. However, an illicit nuclear arsenal in the region has been positively identified.

The [US Army](#) (PDF), former President [Jimmy Carter](#), and Assistant Secretary of State [Rose Gottemoeller](#) have all recently confirmed that the only country in the Middle East that has deployed nuclear weapons is Israel. The Symington and Glenn [amendments](#) to foreign aid law [specifically prohibit US aid](#) to nuclear states outside the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). Iran has signed. Israel hasn't.

Congress can't have it both ways on taxpayer funded sanctions and rewards. If gasoline imports indirectly support Iran's nuclear ambitions, then \$2.775 billion in cash for conventional US weapons and military technology clearly allows Israel to spend other resources on the development and deployment of its illicit nuclear arsenal.

Recently released [CIA files](#) long ago forecast that such an arsenal would not only make Israel more "assertive" but also reluctant to engage in bona fide peace initiatives. Cutting the massive and indirect US subsidization of nukes and forcing Israel to sign the NPT would go further in averting a nuclear arms race and conflicts in the region than targeting Iranian consumers at the gas pump. It would also demonstrate to the American public that the president and Congress, even under the pressure of AIPAC, won't blatantly violate US foreign aid laws by publicly [pretending](#) Iran — rather than Israel — is the region's nuclear hegemon.

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