

Israel, U.S. to Embark on Largest Joint Exercise in Allies' History

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U.S. Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs Andrew Shapiro says security relationship with Israel is broader, deeper, more intense than ever before.

Israel and the U.S. will embark on the “largest” and “most significant” joint exercise in the allies’ history, said Andrew Shapiro, U.S. assistant secretary for political-military affairs, on Saturday.

Speaking to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Shapiro said the exercise will involve more than 5,000 U.S. and Israeli forces, and will simulate Israel’s ballistic missile defense.

“Joint exercises allow us to learn from Israel’s experience in urban warfare and counterterrorism,” said Shapiro.

“Israeli technology is proving critical to improving our Homeland Security and protecting our troops,” he added, explaining that Israeli armor plating technology and the specially designed “Israeli bandage”, being used on American troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, are proven successes.

In addition, he said, Israel will soon gain access to an expedited Congressional Notification process, which will allow for faster trade of smaller, routine sales and purchases of arms between the allies. Countries already subject to expedited Congressional Notification processes are NATO members, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

Shapiro emphasized the Obama Administration’s support for Israel, despite [comments by a senior U.S. official on Friday](#), who expressed concern that Israel would not warn the U.S. before taking military action against Iran’s nuclear facilities.

“Our security relationship with Israel is broader, deeper and more intense than ever before,” said Shapiro, adding that Israel’s military edge was a “top priority” for himself, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and U.S. President Barack Obama.

The U.S. has a \$3 billion per year commitment to Israel, which Shapiro said the Obama Administration would continue to honor over the next ten years, “even in challenging budgetary times”.

Speaking of the economic impact of the U.S.-Israeli relationship, Shapiro said it was important to note that U.S. security assistance to Israel helps support American jobs, since

the “vast majority of security assistance” is spent on American-made goods and services. “We don’t provide assistance out of charity. We provide assistance because it benefits our security,” he said.

“We support Israel because it is in our national interests to do so,” said Shapiro, echoing the [recent report by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#), entitled, “Israel: A Strategic Asset for the United States”, which argues that Israel is a strategic asset to the U.S. “If Israel were weaker, its enemies would be bolder. This would make broader conflict more likely, which would be catastrophic to American interests in the region. It is the very strength of Israel’s military which deters potential aggressors and helps foster peace and stability.”

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