

U.S. Foreign Aid: A Blank Check for Israel

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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The US Congress report – link below – provides an overview of U.S. foreign assistance to Israel. It includes a review of past aid programs, data on annual assistance, and an analysis of current issues.

Israel is the largest cumulative recipient of U.S. foreign assistance since World War II. From 1976-2004, Israel was the largest annual recipient of U.S. foreign assistance, having since been supplanted by Iraq. Since 1985, the United States has provided nearly \$3 billion in grants annually to Israel.

Almost all U.S. bilateral aid to Israel is in the form of military assistance. In the past, Israel also had received significant economic assistance. Strong congressional support for Israel has resulted in Israel's receiving benefits not available to other countries. For example, Israel can use some U.S. military assistance both for research and development in the United States and for military purchases from Israeli manufacturers. In addition, all U.S. foreign assistance earmarked for Israel is delivered in the first 30 days of the fiscal year. Most other recipients normally receive aid in instalments. Congress also appropriates funds for joint U.S.-Israeli missile defence programs.

In August 2007, the Bush Administration announced that it would increase U.S. military assistance to Israel by \$6 billion over the next decade. The agreement calls for incremental annual increases in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) to Israel, reaching \$3 billion a year by FY2011. For FY2011, the Obama Administration requested \$3 billion in FMF to Israel.

According to the State Department's FY2011 budget justification for Foreign Operations, "U.S. assistance will help ensure that Israel maintains its qualitative military edge over potential threats, and prevent a shift in the security balance of the region. U.S. assistance is also aimed at ensuring for Israel the security it requires to make concessions necessary for comprehensive regional peace."

After years of negotiation, the United States and Israel announced in August 2010 that Israel will purchase 20 F-35s at a cost of \$2.75 billion, which will be paid for entirely with FMF grants. The first planes are scheduled to be delivered in 2015, though the deal is still pending final approval by the Israeli cabinet.

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See full report:

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33222.pdf>

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