**Israel Is No Ally**

*But is it even a friend?*

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*[This is an edited version of a speech given by me at the National Summit to Reassess the Israel-US Special Relationship, which took place at the National Press Center in Washington on March 7th. The all day event included speakers Stephen Walt, Justin Raimondo, Paul Pillar, Jeff Blankfort, Alan Brownfeld, Philip Weiss, Ray McGovern and Scott McConnell. It was broadcast live by C-Span and*[***is still available on their site***](http://www.c-span.org/video/?c4486478/60-israel-really-us-ally)*.]*

Inside the beltway types and the media constantly refer to Israel as an ally, which it is not. Israeli soldiers have never fought beside American troops and to be an ally you need an actual alliance on paper. No such legally binding document exists between Washington and Tel Aviv. Sycophants in congress are also fond of calling Israel Washington’s best or closest friend in spite of the fact that it does actual damage to the United States through using its considerable access to the government and media to promote policies that are good neither for the US nor for Israel itself. Recalling the expression that a friend does not let a friend drive drunk, one might observe that the United States has been driving drunk for quite some time, dangerous behavior that has to some extent been encouraged by Israel and its many supporters in Washington.

Israel might or might not have been an actual enabler of the disastrous American invasion of Iraq but it is undeniably true that the Pentagon officials who [**contributed to**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Clean_Break%3A_A_New_Strategy_for_Securing_the_Realm) the “Clean Break” recommendations prepared for Benjamin Netanyahu in 1996 were subsequently behind the rush to war and the forgery of phony intelligence that fed the process. And Iran is Iraq redux. If the Washington goes to war with Tehran in the near future it will not be because Iranians actually threaten America, it will be because Israel and its powerful lobby in the US have succeeded in creating an essentially false casus belli to bring about such action.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who once [**commented**](http://www.haaretz.com/news/report-netanyahu-says-9-11-terror-attacks-good-for-israel-1.244044) that 9/11 was good for Israel, has repeatedly sought to commit the United States to draw red lines that would narrow options for the White House and de facto require it to take military action against Iran. Congress is meanwhile advancing [**legislation**](http://fff.org/explore-freedom/article/op-ed-congress-must-not-cede-its-war-power-to-israel/) that would commit the United States to intervene militarily in support of a unilateral Israeli attack, meaning that Israel could easily be empowered to make the decision on whether or not the US goes to war.

Nothing relating to Israel is quite like how the US interacts with other countries. Direct grants, forgiveness of loans, charitable exemptions, and Pentagon co-production schemes all contribute to the dollar costs that go to support Israel, measures that are not in place for any other nation. Congress also recently [**approved**](http://www.jns.org/news-briefs/2014/3/5/aipac-applauds-house-passage-of-us-israel-strategic-partnership-bill#.UxiE-PldV6K) by a 410 to 1 vote the United States Israel Strategic Partnership Act which grants to Israel an [**exemption**](http://mondoweiss.net/2014/01/committee-strategic-israelis.html) from the reciprocity mandated by the so-called visa waiver program. Israelis will be able to travel freely to the United States while their government will be allowed to refuse entry to American citizens, a privilege granted to no other visa waiver country. One congressman has even [**introduced**](http://www.lobelog.com/congressmen-try-to-restrict-free-speech-to-prevent-boycotts-of-israel/) a bill to cut off federal funding for any academic organization that engages in boycotting Israel. Boycotting other countries is apparently okay.

Israel involves itself in American elections, most recently on behalf of Mitt Romney, it has corrupted our congress, its head of government publicly humiliates our own head of state, its government ministers insult and ridicule John Kerry, and its intelligence officers actually provide alarmist and inaccurate [**private briefings**](http://www.salon.com/2013/11/21/exclusive_gop_senator_unloads_in_private_call/) for American Senators on Capitol Hill. No other country interferes in our system in as many ways as Israel.

That Israel, accustomed to behaving with impunity towards its alleged friend and patron in Washington, might manufacture a pretext reminiscent of the [**Lavon Affair**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lavon_Affair) in Alexandria Egypt in 1954 or the false flag attack carried out on the [**USS Liberty**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Liberty_incident) in 1967 that killed 34 US sailors and civilians to draw the US into a new conflict is not unthinkable. Israel also strongly supports using force to intervene in Syria, a proposition that is opposed overwhelmingly by the American public. In short, Israel has no reluctance to use its enormous political and media clout in the US to pressure successive administrations to conform to its own foreign and security policy views.

One other very good reason why Israel should not receive a free pass on its behavior as well as billions of dollars in military assistance annually is its persistent espionage against the United States. American friends of Israel [**stole**](http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article29901.htm) enriched uranium from a Pennsylvania refinery to create the country’s secret nuclear arsenal. More recently we [**have learned**](http://jewishbusinessnews.com/2014/03/03/arnon-milchan-wins-his-first-oscar-with-12-years-a-slave/) how Arnon Milchan, a Hollywood producer born in Israel, arranged for the illegal purchase of 800 nuclear triggers. He picked up his first Oscar on March 2nd without any interference from the FBI.

The existence of a large scale Israeli [**spying network**](http://www.antiwar.com/justin/j100402.html) at the time of 9/11 has been widely reported, incorporating Israeli companies in New Jersey and Florida as well as hundreds of “art students” nationwide. Five Israelis from one of the companies were observed celebrating against the backdrop of the twin towers going down, the so-called “Dancing Shlomos.” Did Israel know in advance about 9/11? Many in the intelligence community believe that it certainly had knowledge of some aspects relating to the terrorist attack.

While it is often observed that everyone spies on everyone else, particularly true when one is referring to our own NSA, spying is a high risk business and most countries are extremely careful when spying on friends for fear of blowback. Israel, which relies on Washington for billions of dollars in aid and also for political cover in international fora like the United Nations, does not spy discreetly, largely because it knows that few in Washington will seek to hold it accountable. There were, for example, [**no consequences**](http://intelnews.org/2012/01/16/01-909/) for the Israelis when Israeli Mossad intelligence officers using US passports and pretending to be Americans recruited terrorists to carry out attacks inside Iran. Israelis using US passports in that fashion puts every American traveler or businessman at risk.

Israel, where government and business work hand in hand, has obtained significant advantage by systematically [**stealing American technology**](http://ariwatch.com/OurAlly/IsraeliMilitaryAndIndustrialEspionage.htm) with both military and civilian applications. The US developed technology is then reverse engineered and used by the Israelis to support their own exports with considerably reduced research and development costs, giving them a huge advantage against US competitors. Sometimes, when the technology is military in nature and winds up in the hands of an adversary, the consequences can be serious. Israel has sold advanced weapons systems to China that are believed to incorporate technology developed by American companies, including the Python-3 air-to-air missile and the Delilah cruise missile. There is evidence that Israel has also stolen Patriot missile avionics to incorporate into its own Arrow system and that it used US technology obtained in its Lavi fighter development program, which was funded by the US taxpayer to the tune of $1.5 billion, to help the Chinese develop their own J-10 fighter.

The reality of Israeli spying is indisputable. Jonathan Pollard, Ben-Ami Kadish, Stuart Nozette and Larry Franklin are spies for Israel who have been caught, but apart from Pollard they all received no or light sentences and are only the tip of the iceberg. Israel always features prominently in the annual FBI report called “Foreign Economic Collection and Industrial Espionage.” The 2005 report **[states](http://ariwatch.com/OurAlly/IsraeliMilitaryAndIndustrialEspionage.htm)**“Israel has an active program to gather proprietary information within the United States. These collection activities are primarily directed at obtaining information on military systems and advanced computing applications that can be used in Israel’s sizable armaments industry.” It adds that Israel recruits spies, uses electronic methods, and carries out computer intrusion to gain the information. The 2005 report concluded that the thefts eroded US military advantage, enabling foreign powers to obtain expensive technologies that had taken years to develop.

A 1996 Defense Investigative Service report [**noted**](http://ariwatch.com/OurAlly/IsraeliMilitaryAndIndustrialEspionage.htm) that Israel has great success stealing technology by exploiting the numerous co-production projects that it has with the Pentagon. “Placing Israeli nationals in key industries …is a technique utilized with great success.” A General Accounting Office (GAO) examination of espionage directed against American defense and security industries described how Israeli citizens residing in the US had stolen sensitive technology to manufacture artillery gun tubes, obtained classified plans for a reconnaissance system, and passed sensitive aerospace designs to unauthorized users. An Israeli company was caught monitoring a Department of Defense telecommunications system to obtain classified information, while other Israeli entities targeted avionics, missile telemetry, aircraft communications, software systems, and advanced materials and coatings used in missile re-entry.

The GAO has [**concluded**](http://ariwatch.com/OurAlly/IsraeliMilitaryAndIndustrialEspionage.htm) that Israel “conducts the most aggressive espionage operation against the United States of any US ally.” In June 2006, a Pentagon administrative judge overruled an appeal by an Israeli who had been denied a security clearance, stating, “The Israeli government is actively engaged in military and industrial espionage in the United States. An Israeli citizen working in the US who has access to proprietary information is likely to be a target of such espionage.” More recently, FBI counter intelligence officer John Cole has [**reported**](http://antiwar.com/radio/2009/10/26/sibel-edmonds-and-john-m-cole/) how many cases of Israeli espionage are dropped under orders from the Justice Department. He provides a “conservative estimate” of 125 viable investigations into Israeli espionage involving both American citizens and Israelis that were stopped due to political pressure from above.

So is Israel an ally of the United States? The answer is most definitely no. Is it even a friend? Well, I suppose there are all kinds of friends in the world but if you judge Israel by its record on how it interacts with the American government and people I think the answer would also have to be no.

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