

Netanyahu Ups the US Ante

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu continues to play the tune to which U.S. politicians, including presidents and presidential candidates, dance. Now, his price for a future swirl around the dance floor is being raised to \$4.5 billion a year, as retired Army Col. Ann Wright explains.

By Ann Wright

President Barack Obama, having met with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu on Nov. 9 at the White House, is considering Israel's request for a 50 percent increase of nearly \$1.5 billion in U.S. military funding, which would bring the U.S. donation used for killing Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza to \$4.5 billion a year.

As it stands now, more than half of the U.S. foreign military aid for 2016 goes to Israel. As in all things, Israel gets special treatment by the U.S. allowing Israel to spend 25 percent of its U.S. gift to pay itself for buying weapons from its own weapons industry.

According to a recent [congressional report](#), Israel has received \$124.3 billion in military assistance from the U.S. since its founding in 1948. The report states that "strong congressional support for Israel has resulted in Israel receiving benefits not available to any other countries; for example, Israel can use U.S. military assistance both for research and development in the United States and for military purchases from Israeli manufacturers.

"In addition, U.S. assistance earmarked for Israel is generally delivered in the first 30 days of the fiscal year, while most other recipients normally receive aid in installments, and Israel (as is also the case with Egypt) is permitted to use cash flow financing for its U.S. arms purchases.

"In addition to receiving U.S. State Department-administered foreign assistance, Israel also receives funds from annual defense appropriations bills for rocket and missile defense programs. Israel pursues some of those programs jointly with the United States."

As Obama was meeting Netanyahu, eight blocks away at the Palestine Center in Washington, D.C., a surgeon from Norway who works part of each year in al Shifa hospital in Gaza, told of the devastation, destruction and human suffering these American weapons and dollars cause.

Dr. Mads Gilbert spoke of 51 days of terror in Gaza in the summer of 2014 as the Israeli attack forces brutalized the people of Gaza with Israeli and U.S.

artillery, drone ordnance for assassinations, F-16s, hellfire missiles and dense inert military explosives.

Gilbert said the 2014 Israeli attack on Gaza was 500 percent stronger than Israel's 2009 attack, when he was also working at al Shifa hospital when the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) attacked Gaza. In 2014, the IDF fired 50,000 shells into Gaza and conducted over 6,000 air strikes, destroying over 3,500 buildings in Gaza City alone including over 50 percent of the hospitals in Gaza.

At the end of the 51-day attack, 2,250 Palestinians were dead, including 551 children and 299 women. Some 3,500 Palestinian children were wounded and the 1 million children and youth who live in Gaza were all deeply affected by the attacks. Sixty percent of the 1.8 million who live in Gaza are under the age of 22.

Dr. Gilbert's presentation included photos of the carnage caused by Israeli attacks and the audio of the sounds of jets racing overhead, bombs exploding and buildings collapsing.

Citing the report of the United Nations Independent Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict, Gilbert said that the IDF purposefully targeted the civilian population including entire families and that the IDF purposefully targeted hospitals, ambulances and four UN shelter facilities.

The report said, "Hundreds of Palestinian civilians were killed in their own homes, especially women and children. At least 142 families lost three or more members in an attack on a residential building during the summer of 2014, resulting in 742 deaths. The fact that Israel did not revise its practice of air-strikes, even after their dire effects on civilians became apparent, raises the question of whether this was part of a broader policy which was at least tacitly approved at the highest level of government."

Additionally, "the commission is concerned about Israel's extensive use of weapons with a wide kill and injury radius; though not illegal, their use in densely populated areas is highly likely to kill combatants and civilians indiscriminately. There appears also to be a pattern whereby the IDF issued warnings to people to leave a neighbourhood and then automatically considered anyone remaining to be a fighter. This practice makes attacks on civilians highly likely. During the Israeli ground incursion into Gaza that began in mid-July 2014, hundreds of people were killed and thousands of homes destroyed or damaged."

The commission report added: "Palestinian armed groups fired 4,881 rockets and 1,753 mortars towards Israel in July and August 2014, killing 6 civilians,

including one child and injuring at least 1,600." A total of 66 Israeli soldiers were killed in military operations inside Gaza.

The commission also reported: "In the West Bank including East Jerusalem, 27 Palestinians were killed and 3,020 injured between June and August 2014. The number killed in these three months was equivalent to the total for the whole of 2013. The commission is concerned about what appears to be the increasing use of live ammunition for crowd control by the Israeli Security Forces, which raises the likelihood of death or serious injury."

The report continued, "Impunity prevails across the board for violations allegedly committed by Israeli forces, both in Gaza and the West Bank. 'Israel must break with its lamentable track record in holding wrong doers accountable,' said the commissioners, 'and accountability on the Palestinian side is also woefully inadequate.'"

Signaling further attacks on Gaza during a Nov. 10 talk at the Center for American Progress in Washington, Netanyahu said Gaza has "become this poison thumb, this poison dagger that sends rockets" into Israel and that Israel must be prepared for a long period of tension.

The U.S. government's blind backing for whatever Israel does, while providing the weapons for Israel to do it, is dangerous for both the United States and Israel.

As Israeli journalist Gideon Levy recently wrote concerning Hillary Clinton's unwavering support for Israel: "support [for] the continued occupation is like a person who continues to buy drugs for an addicted relative. This is neither concern nor friendship; it is destruction. 'false' friends of Israel have been one of the curses on this country for years. Because of them, Israel can continue to act as wildly as it likes, thumbing its nose at the world and paying no price. Because of them, it can destroy itself unhindered."

Levy's comments about former Secretary of State Clinton equally applies to the unqualified support for Israel given by both Republican- and Democratic-led U.S. administrations.

Israeli attacks on people in Gaza and the West Bank will end only when we the citizens of the United States force our government to stop its military and diplomatic backing of the State of Israel.

Ann Wright served 29 years in the U.S. Army/Army Reserves and retired as a Colonel. She also was a U.S. diplomat for 16 years and resigned in 2003 in opposition to the war on Iraq. She has been in Gaza six times and was on the 2010 Gaza Flotilla that was attacked by the IDF, which executed nine passengers

and wounded 50.
