

US Taxpayers Foot \$5 Billion Bill For Israel's Wars

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For many years the American media said that "Israel receives \$1.8 billion in military aid" or that "Israel receives \$1.2 billion in economic aid." Both statements were true, but since they were never combined to give us the complete total of annual U.S. aid to Israel, they also were lies, true lies.

Recently Americans have begun to read and hear that "Israel receives \$3 billion in annual U.S. foreign aid." That's true. But it's still a lie. The problem is that in fiscal 1997 alone, Israel received from a variety of other U.S. federal budgets at least \$525.8 million above and beyond its \$3 billion from the foreign aid budget, and yet another \$2 billion in federal loan guarantees. So the complete total of U.S. grants and loan guarantees to Israel for fiscal 1997 was \$5,525,800,000.

One can truthfully blame the mainstream media for never digging out these figures for themselves, because none ever have. They were compiled by the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs. But the mainstream media certainly are not alone. Although Congress authorizes America's foreign aid total, the fact that more than a third of it goes to a country smaller in both area and population than Hong Kong probably never has been mentioned on the floor of the Senate or House. Yet it's been going on for more than a generation.

Probably the only members of Congress who even suspect the full total of U.S. funds received by Israel each year are the privileged few committee members who actually mark it up. And almost all members of the concerned committees are Jewish, have taken huge campaign donations orchestrated by Israel's Washington, DC lobby, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), or both. These congressional committee members are paid to act, not talk. So they do and they don't.

The same applies to the president, the secretary of state, and the foreign aid administrator. They all submit a budget that includes aid for Israel, which Congress approves, or increases, but never cuts. But no one in the executive branch mentions that of the few remaining U.S. aid recipients worldwide, all of the others are developing nations which

either make their military bases available to the U.S., are key members of international alliances in which the U.S. participates, or have suffered some crippling blow of nature to their abilities to feed their people such as earthquakes, floods or droughts.

Israel, whose troubles arise solely from its unwillingness to give back land it seized in the 1967 war in return for peace with its neighbors, does not fit those criteria. In fact, Israel's 1995 per capita gross domestic product was \$15,800. That put it below Britain at \$19,500 and Italy at \$18,700 and just above Ireland at \$15,400 and Spain at \$14,300.

All four of those European countries have contributed a very large share of immigrants to the U.S., yet none has organized an ethnic group to lobby for U.S. foreign aid. Instead, all four send funds and volunteers to do economic development and emergency relief work in other less fortunate parts of the world.

The lobby that Israel and its supporters have built in the United States to make all this aid happen, and to ban discussion of it from the national dialogue, goes far beyond AIPAC, with its \$15 million budget, its 150 employees, and its five or six registered lobbyists who manage to visit every member of Congress individually once or twice a year.

AIPAC, in turn, can draw upon the resources of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, a roof group set up solely to coordinate the efforts of some 52 national Jewish organizations on behalf of Israel.

Among them are Hadassah, the Zionist women's organization, which organizes a steady stream of American Jewish visitors to Israel; the American Jewish Congress, which mobilizes support for Israel among members of the traditionally left-of-center Jewish mainstream; and the American Jewish Committee, which plays the same role within the growing middle-of-the-road and right-of-center Jewish community. The American Jewish Committee also publishes *Commentary*, one of the Israel lobby's principal national publications.

Perhaps the most controversial of these groups is B'nai B'rith's Anti-Defamation League. Its original highly commendable purpose was to protect the civil rights of American Jews. Over the past generation, however, the ADL has regressed into a conspiratorial and, with a \$45 million budget, extremely well-funded hate group.

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