

How the US funds its Israeli attack dog

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19 November 2023

US President Joe Biden has famously stated, “Israel is the best three-billion-dollar investment we make. Were there not an Israel, the United States would have to invent an Israel to protect her interests in the region.”

That the Biden administration has just asked for a supplementary emergency \$14.3 billion, more than three times the annual budget, for Israel confirms that what is meant by this panegyric is Israel’s role as a garrison state, fronting US imperialism’s aggression in the strategically vital Middle East region.

The genocidal offensive against Gaza is being wholly funded by Washington in furtherance of broader war aims targeting Iran.

Some \$5.25 billion of this vastly inflated sum will go to the Defense Department, largely to replace arms stocks given to Israel; \$4 billion will go to Israeli arms corporations and Raytheon for air and missile defense systems; \$1.35 billion to Israel for research into and development of laser interceptors; \$150 million for State Department requirements; and \$3.5 billion for Biden’s discretionary distribution, outside congressional and public scrutiny, to Israel’s warmongering government.

Washington’s determined effort to ensure that its attack dog can continue slaughtering the Palestinians in Gaza underscores that the horrific crimes being carried out there are part of US imperialism’s drive to establish American supremacy throughout the Middle East.

All of this is in gross violation of US legislation prohibiting aid to governments implicated in violations of human rights and to nuclear-armed states or states that seek to use such funds for the development of nuclear weapons. Israel has never admitted to possessing nuclear weapons, but it is an open secret that it has missiles pointed at all its rivals in the region. Seymour Hersch, in his book, *The Samson Option*, has documented the direct role of successive US presidents, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson, in Israel’s nuclear programme.

The US has provided Israel with more aid since World War II than any other country, a total of \$158 billion in non-inflation-adjusted dollars in bilateral assistance and missile defense funding, equal to \$260 billion in 2021 (inflation-adjusted) US dollars. While Israel received significant economic assistance between 1971 and 2007, today almost all US aid to Israel is in the form of military assistance.

The US provided very little aid, just \$50 million a year, until the 1967 Arab-Israeli war when the Zionist state demonstrated its strength vis a vis all the Arab armies and began its rule over the Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza. US assistance increased after every military intervention and suppression of the Palestinians. It increased after the Oslo peace talks, and again after

they collapsed. It has continued long after Israel faced no external military threat. The purpose of US aid is to ensure Tel Aviv’s military superiority.

By 1986, aid had risen to a massive \$3 billion a year (split between \$1.2 billion economic and \$1.8 billion military assistance) plus some \$500 million a year aid from other parts of the US budget—or, in some cases, off-budget. In 2009, military aid alone rose to \$3 billion a year and in 2018 to \$3.8 billion a year, making Israel the highest per capita recipient of US aid in the world.

Similarly, the US provides economic assistance to a country with a population of 9 million that has a GDP of \$564 billion, far larger than the combined GDP of its immediate Arab neighbours, including Egypt, which has a population of 105 million. Only Saudi Arabia, with its massive oil wealth, has a larger GDP—at just over one trillion dollars—in the Middle East.

US aid to the whole of sub-Saharan Africa, with its population of approximately one billion, is around \$8 billion a year.

Normally US aid is tied to specific projects and the purchase of US goods and services, and overseen by the government agency, USAID; but most US aid to Israel goes straight into its Exchequer as a cash transfer. Aid usually comes in the form of loans that have interest and repayment obligations. Most of the military loans to Israel, however, have been converted into grants, with the remaining military loans were “forgiven” by Congress, ultimately paying for the purchase of US weaponry—a backdoor subsidy to the military-industry complex. Only economic aid had to be repaid with interest.

Even the annual grants to Israel have repeatedly been insufficient. In 1992-96, the US stepped in to provide \$10 billion in loan guarantees, allowing Israel to borrow funds at a lower cost, to prevent state bankruptcy.

The US has also greenlighted settlement expansion. While officially President Bill Clinton deducted the cost of settlements from the aid, he simply made equivalent amounts available as grants from other sources that subsidised the settlements. In 2003, during the second Intifada, the Bush administration provided a further \$9 billion, a scheme that was extended in 2012.

Washington has also provided political cover for Israel at the United Nations. Since 1972, the US has vetoed at least 53 resolutions in the Security Council critical of Israel’s policies and actions in the Occupied Territories, while using the veto threat to get resolutions withdrawn or watered down on countless other occasions.

US imperialism's garrison state

What does Israel do for the US that merits such lavish support?

First and foremost, Israel kept the Stalinist bureaucracy in Moscow at bay during the Cold War with its defeats of Egypt and Syria, both of whom were armed by the Soviet Union, in 1967 and 1973. It prevented victories by the Palestinians and their supporters beyond Israel's borders: in Jordan in 1970 and Lebanon 1976-82—where it supported the fascistic Christian Phalange against the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and its Shiite allies in the Lebanese civil war that raged between 1975-90—as well as in the occupied territories. It thus helped to suppress the Arab working class and maintain the decrepit and corrupt bourgeois national regimes in power.

In effect, Israel replaced Britain after its withdrawal from “east of Suez” as the policeman of the Middle East on behalf of US imperialism.

The Israeli military occupied much of Lebanon between 1982 and 2000, long after the US had been forced to withdraw following Hezbollah's massive bomb attacks on American forces in 1983. In 2006, it launched an ultimately unsuccessful war on Lebanon, aimed at transforming its northern neighbour into a vassal state as part of US imperialism's plans to establish its hegemony over the entire region.

Like its earlier interventions against the Palestinians and their allies, the immediate aim of the war—the elimination of the Iranian and Syrian-backed Hezbollah as a military and political force within Lebanon—was to crush all resistance to Israeli and American domination and strengthen the power of rightwing, pro-US forces as an essential preparation for regime change in Syria and ultimately Iran.

Israel's frequent wars provided the US with live testing for its arms, often against Soviet weaponry. With its nuclear arsenal, Israel had weapons capable of reaching the Soviet Union. It prevented the emergence of Iraq as a nuclear power with the bombing of Iraq's nuclear reactor in 1981. Similarly, in 2007, it bombed a suspected nuclear reactor in southeast Syria, reportedly after the Bush administration expressed its unwillingness to do so and despite fears that Syria would retaliate.

No less valuable were Israel's covert services that provided its paymaster in Washington with deniability. Tel Aviv served as a conduit for US arms to regimes the US could not be seen to be assisting: apartheid South Africa, Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran during the Iran-Iraq war, and numerous military dictatorships and right-wing rebel forces, particularly in Latin America. Israel's intelligence service, Mossad, provides Washington with intelligence gathering not just in the Middle East but in other key strategic areas like Russia and Central Asia and even parts of Latin America.

In Iran, Israeli agents have assassinated senior nuclear scientists and sabotaged critical infrastructure. As well as attacks on Iranian targets by air and at sea, it has carried out thousands of attacks on Iranian-backed forces in Syria since the start of the CIA-backed proxy war for regime change in 2011.

Israel has trialled novel forms of interrogation and torture, later

to be used in Iraq, and pioneered “targeted assassinations” of Palestinian leaders, now a widespread practice for Washington, including against its own citizens in Yemen.

Washington plans war against Iran

US “aid” is nothing more than payment for services rendered, conditional on Tel Aviv's faithful execution of Washington's dictates.

The *World Socialist Web Site* repeatedly warned that the fascistic government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was pushing for an all-out confrontation with the Palestinians, with the army, police and settlers mounting near-daily attacks on towns and villages in the West Bank since the start of 2023 and religious bigots seeking ever greater control over the al-Aqsa Mosque compound.

At the same time, Netanyahu was ramping up his rhetoric against Iran and its allies in Syria and Lebanon. His efforts were aimed at inciting retaliatory attacks, creating a climate of fear and apprehension to deflect the explosive social tensions and political opposition to his government outwards against a “common enemy.”

The US sanctioned the war in advance. It is working closely with Israel's made-in-the-USA war machine to carry it out, dispatching warships and troops to the eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf. At the diplomatic level, it refuses to even consider a ceasefire.

President Joe Biden openly legitimizes Israel's genocide and ethnic cleansing as an instrument of US foreign policy. It is a continuation of its military aggression in Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria and signals future military assaults on Iran and its allies in Syria, Lebanon and elsewhere in pursuit of US domination of the resource-rich region.

Israel's US-backed slaughter in Gaza can only be ended by the independent political mobilization of the working class throughout the Middle East and internationally, including those Israeli workers who oppose the racist xenophobia of their government and political parties, in a struggle for socialism and against capitalism.



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