

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:  
APPROPRIATIONS

BUDGET

HEALTH, EDUCATION,  
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

HOMELAND SECURITY  
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

April 26, 2016

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As your Administration continues negotiations with Israel on a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for security assistance, I am writing to express my support for a substantially enhanced long-term agreement that provides Israel the resources it requires to defend itself and to preserve its qualitative military edge. Israel continues to be America's strongest ally in the volatile Middle East, but it faces persistent and varied security challenges. Therefore, the United States must further strengthen our relationship with Israel through the signing of a robust new MOU.

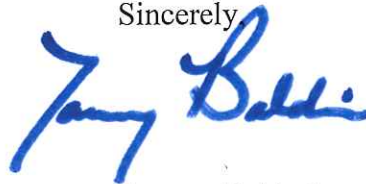
I have spent more time in Israel than in any other foreign country and have had the opportunity to see firsthand the security challenges Israelis face. After my most recent trip in January 2016, I came away with the firm belief that in light of numerous direct threats and ongoing regional uncertainty, U.S. security assistance to Israel must be increased. Indeed, according to the Israeli Government, Hezbollah has increased the size of its arsenal, positioning up to 150,000 rockets and missiles to Israel's north and promising to attack at a time of its choosing. The Syrian civil war has produced multiple terrorist groups dedicated to Israel's destruction, including affiliates of al Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Iran's intervention in Syria has brought the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Shi'ite militias near Israel's border. In the south, Hamas has grown its rocket and missile inventory and is actively rebuilding tunnels to attack Israel. The Sinai has become a lawless haven for militant Islamist groups. Iran is actively helping most of these groups, in addition to illicitly testing sophisticated ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads. Last month, two such weapons were launched bearing the ominous words in Hebrew: *"Israel should be wiped out."*

In addition to these immediate threats, Israel must prepare for the possibility that regional instability could trigger dramatically adverse political change in countries that currently have a strategic relationship with the United States. Were this to occur—in an area of the world that is awash in weapons—Israel could quickly find itself on the wrong end of a newly shifted regional military balance. Adequately planning and allocating resources for this possibility is a strategic challenge, particularly when compounded by the mounting cost of the new aircraft and other weapons systems that Israel must acquire to keep pace with its neighbors.

Throughout my career, and more recently as a member of the Senate Committee on Appropriations, I have been proud to work with you and previous administrations to provide

Israel the essential resources it needs to survive in a dangerous region. While U.S.-Israeli cooperative missile defense programs like Iron Dome, David's Sling, and the Arrow System, all of which are funded through the annual defense appropriations process, are an effective and critical part of the bilateral strategic relationship, the MOU serves as the foundation for American security assistance to our greatest ally in the region. As this year moves ahead, I believe that Congress should consider increasing Fiscal Year 2017 funding for cooperative missile defense programs. At the same time, I respectfully urge you to conclude an agreement with Israel for a robust new MOU that increases aid while retaining the current terms of our existing aid program. That MOU should pledge aid at a level that will enable Israel to combine our assistance with its own increased defense budget to meet its essential defense needs over the coming decade. I look forward to working with you on this critical issue.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Tammy Baldwin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tammy" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Baldwin".

Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator