

Israel Aid / Red Sea Operations Supplemental

THE ISSUE

- Unlike the money being earmarked for Ukraine and various humanitarian initiatives, the funding for Israel in this bill is at least focused on military aid that is in the security interests of the United States, albeit on a much smaller scale.
- The supplemental would also loosen existing requirements about the transfer of weapons to Israel, allowing the Pentagon to send all categories of defense articles—including new defense articles, not just old or obsolete equipment—and shortening the time for the notice the President must provide Congress before transferring weapons to Israel.
- As for humanitarian aid to Gaza, it is clear that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the main U.N. agency used to deliver such aid, was captured by and has actively funded Hamas terrorists.
- While this bill prohibits funding through UNRWA, the problem of aid diversion to Hamas and other terrorist groups plagues all international and nongovernmental aid organizations operating in Gaza, and they all lack appropriate vetting and reporting systems to prevent the diversion, misuse, or destruction of U.S. assistance.
- It is therefore highly likely that U.S. taxpayer-funded humanitarian aid to Gaza, including some of the aid in this bill, would again be diverted to support further Hamas attacks on Israel.

ISRAEL FUNDING: \$14.1 BILLION

\$10.6 billion in support to Israel. Significant amounts of this funding are for Israeli missile defense capabilities, including \$1.2 billion for the Iron Beam missile defense system and \$4 billion for the Iron Dome and David's Sling defense systems to counter short-range rocket threats. \$801.3 million of this bucket is slated for the additional procurement of ammunition.

\$3.5 billion in foreign military financing. Significantly, this section waives any congressional notification requirement that would be applicable to the use of these funds to purchase weapons and defense equipment produced in the United States.

ANALYSIS

Confusingly, many of the sections that had been labeled as pertaining only to Ukraine or only to Israel in the original emergency supplemental request a few months ago are now labeled as intended “to respond to the situations in Israel and Ukraine” or even “and areas and countries impacted by the situations in Israel and Ukraine.” The intent seems to be to conflate the two issues in the minds of voters and lawmakers. Ukraine aid and Israel aid should be considered as separate issues and deserve separate votes.

Iron Beam is a new directed-energy weapon defense system for shooting down incoming rockets, mortars, or drones—similar to the Iron Dome but considerably less expensive to operate. The Iron Beam has been developed by the Israeli government and Israeli defense contractor Rafael Advanced Defense Systems in partnership with the U.S. government and Lockheed Martin.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at <https://report.heritage.org/fs261>

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RED SEA OPERATIONS: \$2.4 BILLION

This \$2.4 billion is slated for U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) to use for operations, force protection, and the replacement of combat expenditures. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), one of the bill's primary architects, describes this funding as being intended to replace combat expenditures from the Red Sea operations currently being conducted.

ANALYSIS

This funding will not do anything to solve the issues the U.S. is currently facing either in Iraq, Syria, and Jordan or in the Red Sea. The Biden Administration has allowed Iran-backed militias to target American troops at will throughout the region by allowing more than a hundred attacks on U.S. bases before the attack that claimed the lives of three American soldiers in late January. Meanwhile, U.S. warships in the Red Sea have been shooting down incoming Houthi drones at a cost of \$2 million per missile for the United States and only \$2,000 or so per Houthi drone. The U.S. cannot afford to be wasting these missiles when they are needed to deter China in the Indo-Pacific and U.S. munitions stores are depleted across the globe.