

the region and more threats to American security interests in the future.

Dr. Thompson states, among other things, that:

It (Israel) needs enough money to buy and equip 15 more F-15's for a total force of 40. . . . Making such a purchase would nearly double the Israeli Air Force's capacity for long-range strikes. . . . The US economic and political interest in the Middle East-Persian Gulf region will continue to grow in the years ahead (and) Israel is the only stable, reliable US ally willing to take the necessary risks. Congress and the Clinton Administration need to equip it (Israel) so that it is ready when the time comes.

Mr. President, to share Dr. Thompson's thoughts with my colleagues, I ask unanimous consent that this essay be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the essay was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

**BOLSTERING ISRAEL'S STRATEGIC AIR POWER
SERVES AMERICA'S INTERESTS**

(By Loren B. Thompson, Ph.D.)

Israel's government is currently considering a major purchase of military aircraft from the United States. The pending sale has attracted media attention in the U.S. because it pits two highly-regarded tactical aircraft—the Boeing F-15 and Lockheed Martin F-16—against each other in a competition that may be the last opportunity to keep the F-15 in production.

The F-15 is more capable than the F-16 in some roles, but it is also more expensive. That is one reason why the F-16 has won most of the recent international arms-sale competitions in which both aircraft were offered. With global tensions greatly reduced from the Cold War period, many nations would prefer the operational flexibility of acquiring a larger number of planes for the same price.

Israel will probably be no exception. It is a foregone conclusion that the Israeli Air Force (IAF) will select one of the two planes because the U.S. government subsidizes Israeli arms purchases and the F-15 and F-16 are the only U.S. aircraft being offered in the current competition. But the IAF has over a hundred aging F-4 fighters and A-4 attack planes reaching the end of their useful life, and the multi role F-16 is a much more affordable replacement than the F-15, both in terms of up-front acquisition costs and later support costs. So the F-15 is likely to lose the competition.

THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The U.S. government should not try to dictate to Israel how it organizes or equips its military. On the other hand, Washington should be sensitive to the fact that Israel is one of America's few democratic allies in the Middle East, and its armed forces in the future may be called on to serve as substitutes for U.S. military power. This has happened in the past, most notably when the IAF destroyed Iraq's Osirak reactor in 1981—a facility the Iraqis planned to use for making weapons-grade nuclear material.

The Osirak mission was carried out by Israeli F-16 strike aircraft escorted by F-15 fighters. Its success was good news for every nation in the region, although few Arab states could publicly say so. Saddam Hussein's subsequent behavior demonstrated it was also good news for America, which avoided having to deal with a nuclear-capable dictatorship in a volatile, strategically-important region.

But things have changed in the Middle East since 1981. A number of countries other than Iraq—some of them more distant from Israel—have begun acquiring access to weapons of mass destruction. Iran is developing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, along with the ballistic missiles to deliver such weapons over long distances (it tested the new Shahab medium-range ballistic missile in July 1998). Libya has made similar efforts. And Sudan has become a center of global terrorism, one suspected of sponsoring the manufacture of chem-bio weapons.

These trends, which are likely to grow worse, already pose a serious threat to both Israeli and Western interests in the region. But whereas policymakers in Washington have the luxury of seeing such developments in tactical terms, for Israel they are strategic: the very survival of the Jewish state is at stake. And although it is now fashionable to think of America as the world's policeman, it is clear that Israel will often have more incentive and latitude than the U.S. to respond expeditiously to such threats in the future.

ISRAEL'S STRATEGIC DILEMMA

Which is why the pending arms sale has a special significance: if the government of Prime Minister Ehud Barak decides its top air-power priority is to refresh its force structure with the improved version of the F-16 (the F-16I), Washington shouldn't dispute that decision. But the issue of Israel's strategic strike capability against emerging threats in distant states like Iran should not be neglected. One of the ways in which the F-15I is superior to the F-16I is in its ability to carry bigger bomb loads to greater distances. It would be easier to sustain a long-range bombing campaign against strategic targets near the Iranian capital of Teheran using F-15I's than F-16I's for the simple reason that the F-15I's have about a third more range.

A single F-16I has a maximum weapons carriage of four 2,000-pound bombs, which it can carry to a maximum unrefueled combat radius of over 700 nautical miles. An F-15I can carry the same bombload to a radius of about 1,100 nautical miles, or it can carry up to seven 2,000-pound bombs of lesser range. The performance of the F-15 results from the fact that each of its twin engines generate as much thrust (29,000 pounds) as the single engine on an F-16. Unfortunately the twin engines are also the biggest reason why each F-15I would cost the IAF about 30% more, not counting later support costs. In air warfare, the tradeoff between price and performance often is inescapable.

Fortunately for Israel, long-range strategic strike is a specialized mission that does not require a large number of aircraft, and the IAF already has 25 F-15Is suitable for the mission that it bought in 1995. Furthermore, it's not as though the F-16s can't hit remote targets: it was the strike aircraft against the Osirak reactor. But for truly distant targets, the F-16 imposes performance penalties. Conformal fuel tanks might have to be added at the expense of bombload, or aerial refueling might be necessary in hostile airspace. For these very distant targets, the F-15I is the safer choice.

The problem is that Israel doesn't have enough F-15I's today to prosecute a sustained bombing campaign over great distances, and within current budget constraints it can't afford to buy more—unless it decides to buy fewer F-16s, which would be a bad idea given the age of existing IAF assets and the myriad other missions the F-16Is are needed to cover.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The bottom line is that Israel needs more military assistance funding for aircraft purchases from the United States. Specifically, it needs enough money to buy and equip 15 more F-15Is for a total force of 40, without cutting its planned purchase of F-16s. Some F-15I proponents have called for a "second squadron" of F-15Is, but the U.S. should not be in the business of dictating the organization of the Israeli Air Force. What it should be doing is helping Israel meet the full range of its legitimate military needs.

Fifteen more F-15s for Israel is not enough to keep the F-15 line open for an extended period of time, but that's precisely the point: this may be the last chance for Israel to acquire an adequate strategic strike capability before the F-15 line closes. Making such a purchase would nearly double the IAF's capacity for long-range strikes while permitting more efficient use of the support infrastructure bought to support the 25 F-15Is already in the force. It would also free up F-16s for other missions, thus enhancing utilization of the entire tactical-aircraft inventory.

But the case for funding a viable IAF strategic force transcends Israeli military needs. The U.S. economic and political interest in the Middle East-Persian Gulf region will continue to grow in the years ahead as America becomes more dependent on foreign oil. Unfortunately, its access to bases and freedom to act militarily in the region will probably diminish, forcing it in some cases to rely on allies to achieve military goals. Israel is the only stable, reliable U.S. ally willing to take the necessary risks. Congress and the Clinton Administration need to equip it so that it is ready when the time comes.

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

A message from the House of Representatives was received announcing that the Speaker signed the following enrolled bill on July 1, 1999:

H.R. 775. An act to establish certain procedures for civil actions brought for damages relating to the failure of any device or system to process or otherwise deal with the transition from year 1999 to the year 2000, and for other purposes.

**MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE
RECEIVED DURING ADJOURNMENT**

A message from the House of Representatives was received, during the adjournment of the Senate, announcing that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 1691. An act to protect religious liberty.

H.R. 2466. An act making appropriations for the Department of the Interior and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes.

The message further announced that the House agrees to the resolution (H. Res. 249) returning the Senate the bill (S. 254) to reduce violent juvenile crime, promote accountability by and rehabilitation of juvenile criminals, punish and deter violent gang crime, and for other purposes, in the opinion of this House, contravenes the first clause of the seventh section of the