

New York Times' Kristof Falsely Claims Israelis Aren't Pulling Their Weight In Their Own Defense

by Hugh Fitzgerald



The U.S. spends lots of money on the defense of NATO countries, and on others, too, such as South Korea. But none of that spending is mentioned by Nicholas Kristof. Nor does he seem to mind the billions that go in aid to Egypt and Jordan. Of all those countries that have received our military aid, none has given back so much of value to the U.S. in the form of its own remarkable advances in weapons, offensive and defensive, and in weapons systems. "New York Times Columnist Kristof Questions 'Vast Sums' of US Military Aid to Israel," by Ira Stoll, [I listed yesterday](#) some of the main advances in weaponry that Israel has made and that are now part of America's armory as well.

What's more, there already are extensive conditions on US military aid to Israel, a fact the Kristof column fails to acknowledge. As a Congressional Research Service report notes, "The 1952 Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement and subsequent arms agreements between Israel and the United States limit Israel's use of US military equipment to defensive purposes. The Arms Export Control Act (AECA, 22 U.S.C. §2754) authorizes the sale of US defense articles and services for specific purposes, including 'legitimate self-defense.'"

The report also says another law, "Section 620M of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (FAA), as amended, prohibits

the furnishing of assistance authorized by the FAA and the AECA to any foreign security force unit where there is credible information that the unit has committed a gross violation of human rights."

Other conditions require the military aid to be spent on US-made defense products and contractors, meaning that the aid to Israel is supporting manufacturing and high-tech jobs at US companies....

Every penny in American military aid to Israel must be spent on American weaponry. That aid money stays in America. Kristof fails to acknowledge that requirement.

Kristof thinks Israel should be pressured, by cutting off American military aid to the Jewish state, to engage in "conflict reduction." Israel's whole history has been one of attempting "conflict reduction" with its Arab neighbors, beginning with its offer to make the 1949 armistice lines into permanent borders. For a long time, the Arab states all refused to have anything to do with the Jewish state. Remember the "Three No's" of Khartoum: no negotiation, no peace, no recognition? Sadat broke with that pattern, and thus it was that Israel agree in the Camp David Accords, to return the entire Sinai – 95% of the territory Israel won in the Six Day War – to Egypt, in return for a peace treaty. In 2005, Israel withdrew entirely from Gaza, uprooting – amidst scenes of trauma – the 9,000 Israelis who had lived there. Not only was every single Israeli withdrawn, but the Israelis turned over a flourishing horticultural business, of raising fruit and flowers in 3,000 greenhouses worth millions, to the Palestinians, who expressed their gratitude by promptly destroyed them. Instead of this Israeli withdrawal leading to "conflict reduction," it ended with Hamas in charge, and from Gaza it has ever since been conducting a campaign of terror against Israel. Twice before, Israel found itself compelled to go to war against Hamas – in 2008-2009 and in 2014 – to end,

albeit temporarily, the Hamas terror threat. Now it has been forced to go to war with Hamas a third time. And no doubt Israel will have to do so again in the future. The Israelis call these repeated efforts to cut down their terrorist enemies, "mowing the lawn."

Those moves [returning the entire Sinai to Egypt, pulling out of Gaza, letting Arafat return to the West Bank from Tunis] have been aimed at conflict reduction, as the vast majority of Israelis have no interest in a conflict with their Arab neighbors. Unfortunately, a significant fraction of the Arab neighbors have not reciprocated and have instead pursued the goal of violently eradicating the Jewish state and its inhabitants. The idea that cutting off aid to Israel or imposing more conditions on it – in the face of such an onslaught – would be an appropriate response seems morally obtuse. It would be abandoning an ally under attack, and it would damage whatever international reputation America has for standing by its commitments. It would contradict American values. In a war between democratic, pluralistic Israel and undemocratic, fundamentalist Hamas and Islamic Jihad, why would America side with Hamas and Islamic Jihad and cut aid to Israel? It's a bizarre impulse – no wonder that it hasn't gotten any traction on the US political scene, outside the extreme fringes of the far-right and far-left, and Kristof's New York Times column.

Perhaps Kristof, having been reminded of all the ways Israel has helped the American military, with its long list of technological advances, will devote another column to "the ally worth its weight in gold." Or perhaps he'll find the time to explain to his readers just how much more Israel does for its own defense than do any of our NATO allies.

Do you think Nicholas Kristof, once apprised of all this information about Israel and the tremendous efforts both the government and the citizens make for the defense of the Jewish

state, and the enormous value Israel provides the American military by sharing its technological advances in weaponry, might do the decent thing, acknowledge his error, and let his two million followers on Twitter know that he was very wrong in his dismissive assumptions about Israel, and in his suggestion that military aid to the Jewish state should be cut? No, I don't either.

First published in