

Upgrading U.S. Stockpile in Israel After Weapons Transfer to Ukraine

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The Pentagon's decision to transfer U.S. artillery to Ukraine from a prepositioned stockpile in Israel, known as WRSA-I, provides both crucial support to Kyiv and an overdue opportunity to review and upgrade the stockpile with vital weaponry to help Israel uphold shared interests in the Middle East. Working with Israel, the United States now should fulfill WRSA-I's strategic purpose by replenishing it with precision guided munitions and potentially other much-needed systems for U.S., Israeli, and other partner operations.

What Happened?

- The Pentagon is [transferring to Ukraine](#) 300,000 155 millimeter artillery shells currently stored in a prepositioned stockpile of U.S. weaponry in Israel, called the War Reserve Stock Ammunition-Israel (WRSA-I).

Why Is It Important?

- The U.S. decision to provide Ukraine with munitions from WRSA-I creates a valuable opportunity not only to ensure Ukraine remains well-supplied but to replenish and upgrade a vital strategic asset for the United States, Israel, and their regional partners.
- As JINSA [laid out](#) in detail, WRSA-I's primary purpose as a forward-based arms depot is to serve as a readily accessible reserve – an insurance policy – for Israel to obtain vital munitions that would ensure its military superiority in wartime.
 - » Since it was first established in the 1980s, American officials have stated repeatedly how WRSA-I helps ensure Israel's ability to defend itself at acceptable cost, known in [U.S. law](#) as Israel's "qualitative military edge" (QME) – including by obviating the need for a challenging U.S. resupply to Israel mid-conflict, as happened during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War.
 - The scramble to resupply Ukraine further underscores the strategic and operational value of prepositioning, including by reducing the risk of having to conduct an emergency resupply of Israel that could pull American attention and resources from the ongoing crisis in Europe and possibly the Indo-Pacific.
 - » The United States owns the contents of WRSA-I – reportedly worth around \$1.2 billion – while Israel pays for roughly 90 percent of facility costs. With U.S. approval, Israel can pay for any weapons it pulls from the stockpile, as it has done at least twice during the 2006 Lebanon and 2014 Gaza conflicts.

- As the Ukraine example shows, by offering readily available emergency reserves for the United States to transfer to partners in wartime, prepositioned stockpiles can help offset persistent shortfalls in U.S. defense-industrial manufacturing capacity.
- WRSA-I has become obsolete and no longer serves the strategic purpose of ensuring Israel’s QME.
 - » JINSA understands that WRSA-I has not been upgraded since before the Obama administration, thus rendering the depot full of artillery shells, like those now destined for Ukraine, and unguided “dumb” bombs, which are almost entirely eschewed by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).
 - » Instead, the IDF depends heavily on precision-guided munitions (PGMs) to accurately hit targets on complex, crowded battlefields while minimizing collateral damage, especially in light of its adversaries’ deliberate placement of weapons stockpiles, launchers, and other military infrastructure in close proximity to, and often among, civilian sites.
 - Despite procuring tens of thousands of PGMs in recent years, the demands of Israel’s ongoing operations raise the risk of critical PGM shortfalls that could threaten its deterrence and self-defense against Iran and/or Hezbollah in a [major conflict](#) that likely would be as intense as the 1973 war.
- The recent U.S. decision to supply Ukraine with munitions from WRSA-I creates an opportunity to return the stockpile to its strategic purpose.
 - » The transfer of 155mm shells to Ukraine removes munitions that the IDF does not need and creates storage space for highly capable U.S.-made PGMs.
 - » The United States has reportedly promised to replenish what it removes from WRSA-I, which could expedite the process for upgrading the equipment it contains.
 - The United States and Israel are engaged in an ongoing negotiation about what the Pentagon should include in the replenishment of WRSA-I.

What Should the United States Do Next?

- Working with Israel, the Biden administration urgently should replenish WRSA-I with much-needed PGMs, chiefly Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) tailkits and GBU-39 and GBU-53/B small diameter bombs, and potentially other much-needed weapons.
 - » Given its own growing sense of [urgency](#) for a Plan B alternative to fruitless diplomacy with Tehran, Congress should ensure the administration fulfills WRSA-I’s fundamental purpose by authorizing the administration specifically to emplace these PGMs.
- In tandem, and [in light of](#) the Abraham Accords and Israel’s [reassignment](#) to U.S. Central Command, the administration also should seize this opportunity to transform WRSA-I from a strictly bilateral stockpile into a broader regional prepositioning hub based on operational needs of the U.S. military, the IDF, and Arab partner forces across the Middle East.