

Israel Defense Tech is a Boon, Not Threat to U.S.

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Despite congressional fears concerning Section 219 in this year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the proposal, known as the U.S.-Israel Defense Technology Cooperation Initiative, actually presents great potential to bolster the already robust military relationship between both nations. For many years, the United States and Israel have successfully collaborated in developing countermeasures to defeat missile and drone threats and strengthen subterranean warfare capabilities. The historic joint U.S. and Israeli military operations against Iran in 2026, Epic Fury and Roaring Lion, further demonstrated just how effective the two nations can be when they work together. Yet, the adaptability and innovation displayed by Israeli forces since the October 7, 2023, attacks also show something else—U.S. Armed Forces may not be taking full advantage of Israel's advanced defense capabilities. This is where Section 219 could provide real value to the American warfighter. This provision has become a major bone of contention in Congress, as critics of U.S.-Israel security cooperation in general, such as Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA), have [harangued](#) against it, falsely arguing that the proposal will “integrate” the U.S. and Israeli militaries. However, it's baseless claims such as these that highlight how important it is for policymakers and the public alike to better understand the proposed initiative and recognize how it could greatly benefit the United States.

What is the U.S.-Israel Defense Technology Cooperation Initiative?

Both the Senate and House versions of this year's NDAA have similar proposals directing the U.S. Secretary of Defense to create a U.S.-Israel Defense Technology Cooperation Initiative ([Sec. 219 in the House](#), [Sec. 1217 in the Senate](#)). This initiative aims to synchronize, expand, and accelerate defense cooperative efforts between the United States and Israel, with both bills directing the initiative to:

- Identify “jointly developed or Israeli-origin technologies with operational utility for [potential] integration into United States systems and programs of record”;
- Facilitate “the transition of technologies from research and development into procurement and acquisition pathways”;
- Establish “frameworks for joint ventures, licensing agreements, and United States- based coproduction or manufacturing partnerships with Israeli industry”;
- Coordinate “with relevant Department of Defense components... as appropriate, to align efforts and avoid duplication”;

- Promote “joint training exercises and information-sharing mechanisms to enhance operational readiness to deploy jointly developed technologies”; and
- Ensure “collaborative research initiatives involving government, private sector, and academic institutions in the United States and Israel, [is done] in a manner that protects sensitive technology and information and the national security interests of the United States and Israel.”

The two bills highlight many areas of pre-existing technological collaboration between the countries such as counter-unmanned aerial systems (C-UAS), subterranean warfare, and air and missile defense (Iron Dome, David’s Sling, Arrow 3), as well as new areas of potential collaboration like artificial intelligence (AI) and directed energy. Under the missile defense rubric, the Senate bill further specifies potential collaboration on Golden Dome related programs, where relevant. No specific cooperation on any individual capability is mandated by the initiative.

To manage the program, the House bill calls for Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth to designate an executive agent (as defined by [DoDD 5101.01](#)) to oversee it. Contrastingly, the Senate bill simply calls for the Defense Secretary and Israel’s Defense Minister to coordinate in establishing the program without specifying its leadership structure. Finally, the provision highlights the importance of transparency and requires annual congressional reporting requirements to track the implementation of the program.

Understanding the strategic benefits this initiative will provide, several members of Congress have expressed their support for the legislation on a bipartisan basis. Notably, while highlighting the provision’s strengths in fostering expanded tech opportunities for both countries, Rep. Don Bacon (R-NE) [referred](#) to the overall technology partnership between the United States and Israel as a “win-win relationship,” explaining: “We’ve got Silicon Valley; Israel has Tel Aviv—sort of like Silicon Valley number two. We have gained so many technology advantages from our partners in Israel and vice versa, they gain as well.” Similarly, Rep. Jared Golden (D-ME) [referred](#) to the initiative as a “practical, common-sense effort to improve defense technology cooperation with one of America’s closest allies in an area that will directly affect U.S. military readiness.”

What the Initiative is NOT Going to Do

Despite the substantial potential of this initiative, it has generated heated reactions from some on both the left and the right in Congress, including accusations of integrating the U.S. and Israeli militaries and potential U.S. facilitation of Israeli “war crimes.”

Integrate the U.S. and Israeli Militaries

Opposing the House NDAA provision, Rep. Khanna [posted](#) on X that the initiative “means to integrate our military with Israel’s military.” Rep. Ronny Jackson (R-TX), one of the authors of the initiative, correctly [noted](#) that the term “integration” simply “means integrating useful technologies into U.S. systems, programs of record, and acquisition pipelines,” not bringing United States military forces under the command of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) or vice versa. House Armed Services Committee Chairman Mike Rogers (R-AL) [responded](#) by stating: “Claims that this provision somehow cedes authority to a foreign government are simply ridiculous.” House

Armed Services Ranking Member Adam Smith (D-WA) [concurred](#): “It's not a new framework at all. We have three existing programs where we do military cooperation with Israel to develop technologies. ... to say that this is us bowing to Israel on this is completely inaccurate.”

During debate in the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Khanna also claimed that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu “actually wrote to a member of Congress to put this Sec. [219] into the bill.” He urged fellow members “to tell Netanyahu that America calls the shots, not the prime minister of any other country.” Rep. Jackson responded directly: “I actually am the author of this along with my colleague Mr. [Don] Davis [D-NC]... I never received a letter from the Prime Minister, so that's complete misinformation.”

Finance and Enable War Crimes

In Khanna's same June 1 X post, he wrote that he and Rep. Thomas Massie (R-KY) were putting forward an amendment to the initiative “to stop financing and enabling [Israeli] war crimes.” However, Khanna's statement is riddled with logical fallacies.

Firstly, the initiative does not allocate a single additional dollar to Israel, and therefore, will provide no external funding to the Israeli military. Secondly, the initiative will not “enable” Israel to commit war crimes, since the IDF, like the U.S. military, adheres to the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) and ensures its soldiers operate to the highest of standards in combat. As JINSA's Gaza Assessment Task Force [highlighted](#) in May 2024 after seven straight months of Israeli operations against Hamas in the Gaza Strip, “the IDF demonstrated commitment to implementing and complying with LOAC, including implementing many precautions to mitigate risks to civilians.” Furthermore, the Task Force noted that during Operation Iron Swords, Israel's military accepted several costs in Gaza, such as permitting Hamas operatives to escape or foregoing attacks “in the interest of civilian risk mitigation.”

Current Areas of Significant Cooperation

For years, American and Israeli teams have successfully collaborated in the defense and security fields to protect their civilians and soldiers from enemy harm. Cooperating with Israel, especially in the field of defense technology, has proven beneficial for the United States by leveraging Israeli experience to help the American warfighter better prepare for a variety of military contingencies.

Air and Missile Defense

The most notable forms of defense technology cooperation between the United States and Israel are their work on air and missile defense capabilities. Contractors from both countries have worked together to develop sophisticated defense systems, including Arrow-3, Arrow-2, David's Sling, and the Iron Dome, all of which have an approximate interception rate of over [90 percent](#) and have saved countless lives throughout the region.

Subterranean Warfare

Additionally, the United States has also learned a great deal from Israel in the realm of subterranean warfare. Just this year, Israel has shared cutting-edge technology for combating underground threats with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Department of Defense through the [Joint Anti-Tunneling Initiative](#). Technology developed under this program helps se-

cure Israel's borders with Gaza, Egypt, and Lebanon as well as America's southwest border—directly contributing to the safety of both nations and reinforcing the importance of continuing to collaborate with Israel on emerging subterranean threats.

Potential Areas for Stronger Cooperation

Despite the already strong defense technology collaborations between the two countries in air and missile defense and combating subterranean threats, there is room for improvement in both these areas, as well as other sectors where additional technological cooperation with Israel would benefit the American warfighter.

Air and Missile Defense

As the United States and Israel continue to encounter threats from mutual enemies who are working to deploy advanced weaponry on the battlefield, it is essential that the two nations develop and refine their shared air and missile defense systems to thwart all forms of aerial attacks. One program in this sector that would greatly benefit from continued development includes the proposed [Golden Dome](#) project, which is designed to protect the United States and an area of collaboration highlighted in the Senate's version of the initiative.

Subterranean Warfare

In addition to the Joint Anti-Tunneling Initiative, Israeli troops have acquired valuable insight in combating subterranean threats over the past few years in both Gaza and Lebanon. As illegal tunnel activities, including drug and weapon smuggling, continue to threaten American security, the U.S. military and homeland security officers should take advantage of this opportunity to strengthen its subterranean defenses by learning from Israeli expertise in effectively identifying and combating underground threats.

Counter-UAS

While the U.S. military and IDF have collaborated to identify solutions for countering unmanned aerial systems, there remains significant room for U.S. improvement in combating drone threats as they become more prevalent on the battlefield. Unfortunately, unmanned aerial systems proved to be devastating to U.S. forces during the 2026 Iran War. The United States lost seven service members in two separate Iranian drone attacks on facilities at [Kuwait's Port Shuaiba](#) and the [Prince Sultan Air Base](#) in Saudi Arabia. In response, the United States pursued a partnership with Israel's [Sharp Shooter](#) defense firm, granting the company a contract to develop the Smash 2000LE, a fire control device fixed atop a rifle, for U.S. Marines in June.

By recognizing the IDF's leading role in combating UAS, the American government took a positive step in ensuring the safety of our troops on the battlefield. Instead of devoting time and money to developing technology for combating these aerial systems entirely on our own, the U.S. military can take fuller advantage of proven allied systems. By gaining access to Israeli knowledge and tools, the American defense enterprise can work to improve its ability to protect U.S. civilians and service members from enemy strikes.

Directed Energy

After years of designing and developing the prototype with partial U.S. funding, the IDF [deployed](#) its Iron Beam laser defense system in October 2024 during secret operations to combat incoming Hezbollah drones. Then, in December 2025, the IDF publicly deployed the directed energy system to assist the Iron Dome, David's Sling, and Arrow in intercepting hostile projectiles from Iran and its proxies. The first of its kind to be combat-proven and capable of intercepting drones in seconds, the Iron Beam helps protect Israeli troops and civilians from enemy attacks and only [costs](#) the military just a few dollars per shot, versus tens of thousands for Iron Dome Tamir interceptors.

While the U.S. military is actively developing its own laser defense systems, including the Navy's [HELIOS](#) laser and the Army-Navy [Joint Laser Weapon System](#), Maj Gen Charles Corcoran, USAF (ret.) and JINSA's Yoni Tobin [argued](#) in June 2026, following Operation Epic Fury, that "the United States lacks operational land-based mobile laser defenses at scale." Partnership through the defense initiative would be an opportunity to address these concerns in America's military as Israel's Iron Beam is a proven example of Israel pushing technology further than we've been able to achieve on our own.

Artificial Intelligence

In January 2026, the United States and Israel [signed](#) a joint statement to enter an agreement on strengthening cooperation in several technological areas, including AI and machine learning. Both countries have made significant strides in the field of AI as it becomes increasingly important in modern warfare, such as developing platforms that help [identify targets and synthesize data](#) on the battlefield. In Israel's case, AI advancements assisted the IDF in locating hostages and pinpointing Hamas terrorists in Gaza, demonstrating how AI can help militaries target combatants and prevent civilian harm. However, adversaries, notably [China](#), continue to make progress in this field as well, potentially risking America's AI edge. Rather than tackling this race alone, the United States should collaborate with Israel, including through the defense cooperation initiative, to continue developing advanced AI capabilities, allowing America to maintain or even expand its AI leverage.

Ultimately, the U.S.-Israel Defense Technology Cooperation Initiative provides several opportunities for the United States to acquire sophisticated Israeli technology and learn from the IDF in combating emerging threats. This legislation, and all technological cooperation between the two countries, has the potential to significantly benefit the United States in better preparing us for the future of warfighting and retaining an edge over our adversaries. As Congress prepares to consider and vote on the NDAA, it is essential that they pass this bill, making way for President Trump to sign it into law.