US may have less access to bases in 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 the planes for the total cost of 40. . . . Making such a purchase would nearly double the Israeli Air Force's capacity for long-range strikes. . . . The US economic and military aid to 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. Thomp-
son'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: Israel'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 attention in the United States 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 cost justifies why the F-15 has been most of the recent international arms-sale competitions in which both aircraft were offered. With global tensions greatly reduced from the Cold War era, 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 Israel's military. And the F-16 is 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 in its inventory, and many of them are likely to be retired. The IAF's need for new planes is urgent, as any delay could have significant repercussions on the IAF's ability to meet its strategic and tactical requirements.

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 as significant to the U.S. as they are to U.S. military power. This has happened in the past, most notably when the IAF destroyed a nuclear reactor in 1981—a facility the Iraqis planned to use for manufacturing weapons-grade nuclear material.

The Osirak mission was carried out by Israel's F-16 strike aircraft, and it was a significant event in the history of the Israel Air Force. It was the first time that an Israeli aircraft had participated in a military operation that resulted in the destruction of a nuclear reactor, and it demonstrated the capabilities of the F-16 in a high-stakes mission.

Unfortunately, the Osirak mission was followed by a period of relative quiet in the Middle East, but things have changed in the Middle East since 1981. A number of countries other than Iraq—such as Israel—have become more aware of the need to acquire modern, capable aircraft for their air forces.

The Bottom Line

The bottom line is that Israel needs more military assistance funding for aircraft purchases. Specifically, it needs enough money to buy and equip 15 more F-19s for a total force of 40, without cutting its planned purchase of F-16s. Some F-19 proponents have called for a "second squadron" of F-19s, but the U.S. should not be in the business of dictating the organization of the Israeli Air Force. What U.S. is doing is helping Israel meet the full range of its legitimate military needs.

Five 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 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 the U.S. to supply more efficient use of the support infrastructure bought to support the 25 F-15s 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 transfers 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.
HOUSE on the amendment of the House to the bill (S. 1059) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2000 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes: As additional conferences from the Committee on House Administration, for consideration of section 1303 of the Senate bill and modifications therein, placed on the calendar: Mr. THOMAS, Mr. BOEHNER, and Mr. HOYER.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read twice and placed on the calendar:

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.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. ROTH, from the Committee on Finance, without amendment:

S. 1386. An original bill to amend the Trade Act of 1974 to extend the authorization for trade adjustment assistance.

S. 1387. An original bill to extend the Generalized System of Preferences.

S. 1388. An original bill to extend the Generalized System of Preferences, placed on the calendar.

S. 1389. An original bill to provide additional trade benefits to certain beneficiary countries in the Caribbean; from the Committee on Finance; placed on the calendar.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. ABRAHAM (for himself, Mr. BOND, and Mr. KOHL):

S. 1384. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for a national folic acid education program to prevent birth defects, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

THE FOLIC ACID PROMOTION AND BIRTH DEFECTS PREVENTION ACT OF 1999

Mr. ABRAHAM, Mr. President, I rise to introduce the Folic Acid Promotion and Birth Defects Prevention Act of 1999. I would also like to thank my colleagues Senator Bond and Senator Kohl for cosponsoring this important piece of legislation.

Mr. President, each year over 8,000 infants die from birth defects. The loss of these children, who could have grown up to be community leaders, teachers, doctors, or lawyers, weighs heavily upon our society. In addition, each year over 2,500 babies born live with serious birth defects of the brain and spine, called neural tube defects, and over 50 percent of these cases are preventable. In 1991, research proved that if pregnant women take as little as 400 micrograms of B vitamin folic acid each day, 50 to 70 percent of all cases of these serious birth defects of the brain and spine, such as spina bifida, would be prevented. Unfortunately, this information is not widely known by the public. According to a Gallup Poll conducted for the March of Dimes, only 32 percent of women of childbearing age reported taking a multivitamin with folic acid on a daily basis.

We must broaden public awareness about the prevention of these crippling defects. For this reason, I have introduced the Folic Acid Promotion and Birth Defects Prevention Act of 1999. This legislation authorizes $20 million for the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), in partnership with state and local public and private entities, to launch an education and public awareness campaign, conduct research to identify effective strategies for increasing folic acid consumption by women of reproducing age, and evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies.

Mr. President, this legislation is an effort to link great advances in research with everyday life. This life-saving information about the consumption of folic acid will help increase the health and well-being of women and infants, needs to be broadcast to families and individuals across the country. It is my firm belief that this legislation will be the vehicle to help bring this important message into every home in America.

I would like to take a moment to thank the March of Dimes for their involvement in this important work. The March of Dimes will be critical in getting this legislation passed and in helping spread the message of the benefits of folic acid. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 324

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 324, a bill to amend the Controlled Substances Act with respect to registration requirements for practitioners who dispense narcotic drugs in schedule IV or V for maintenance treatment or detoxification treatment.

S. 556

At the request of Mr. BAUCUS, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. ALLARD) was added as a cosponsor of S. 556, a bill to amend title 29, United States Code, to establish guidelines for the relocation, closing, consolidation, or construction of post offices, and for other purposes.

S. 593

At the request of Mr. COVERDELL, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. DOMENICI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 593, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to increase maximum taxable income for the 15 percent rate bracket, to provide a partial exclusion from gross income for dividends and interest received by individuals, to provide a long-term capital gains deduction for individuals, to increase the traditional IRA contribution limit, and for other purposes.

S. 782

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. INOUYE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 782, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to modify the exception to the prohibition on the interception of oral, or electronic, communications to require a health insurance issuer, health plan, or health care provider obtain an enrollee’s or patient’s consent to their interception, and for other purposes.

S. 821

At the request of Mr. LAUTENBERG, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 821, a bill to provide for the collection of data on traffic stops.

S. 1007

At the request of Mr. EFFORDS, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1007, a bill to assist in the conservation of great apes and projects with persons who demonstrated expertise in the conservation of great apes.