

105TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. CON. RES. 268

Honoring the international corps of volunteers, known as Machal, who served Israel in its War of Independence.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 30, 1998

Ms. HARMAN submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Honoring the international corps of volunteers, known as Machal, who served Israel in its War of Independence.

Whereas on November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly voted to partition the British Mandate of Palestine and to create the State of Israel;

Whereas on May 14, 1948, the people of Israel proclaimed the establishment of the sovereign and independent State of Israel, which the United States immediately recognized by establishing diplomatic relations;

Whereas the new State of Israel, having no regular army, no tanks, no military planes, and no artillery with which to defend itself, faced the enmity of neighboring countries and the clear prospect of war;

Whereas, in anticipation of the need to defend itself from invasion, Israel's leaders augmented the country's defenses by recruiting an international corps of volunteers, known as "Machal" and whose members were known as "Machalniks" for the Hebrew "Mitnadvei Chutz L'Aretz" meaning "volunteers from outside Israel";

Whereas the Machal volunteers came from 37 different countries and included among their ranks 1,500 Americans, 400 Canadians, 700 South Africans, 600 Britons, and contingents from France, Belgium, Australia, the Belgian Congo, Rhodesia, Finland, Russia, Argentina, and Cuba;

Whereas the Machal volunteers, many of whom were veterans of World War II, were eager to support the new Jewish state in its hour of need and volunteered despite obstacles, restrictions, and prohibitions, some of which were imposed on them by their own governments;

Whereas the Machal volunteers served in 14 branches of the Israeli military during the country's War of Independence and were among Israel's first naval commanders, radar technicians, heavy artillery gunners, tank commanders, senior infantry commanders, fighter and bomber pilots, and surgeons treating eye wounds and burns;

Whereas the Machal volunteers formed the core of the Israeli Air Force, providing battle-hardened combat pilots for the first fighter and bomber wings, and creating the Air Transport Command that ferried badly needed Messerschmitt aircraft and weapons from Czechoslovakia to Tel Nof Air Base in Israel;

Whereas 240 American and Canadian Machal volunteers served as crews aboard the 10 "Aliya Bet" ships that brought 32,000 Holocaust survivors to the British Man-

date of Palestine, in defiance of the British blockade on Jewish immigration;

Whereas the Machal volunteers contributed far beyond their numbers to Israel's capability to fight one of its most decisive wars;

Whereas, while the Israeli War of Independence was costly for all of Israel, the Machal volunteers suffered disproportionately, losing 119 volunteers in action, including 19 of the 33 pilots who lost their lives fighting for Israel; and

Whereas, as the world prepares to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Israeli War of Independence, the heroic role of the Machal volunteers serving Israel in its hour of need deserves recognition: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
 2 *concurring)*, That the Congress honors the courageous
 3 service of the international corps of volunteers, known as
 4 "Machal", who contributed unselfishly to help ensure the
 5 birth of the State of Israel.

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