



Will The U.S. Save Israel or Will Israel Save The U.S.?

By: Herbert I. London

With a vote at the UN this week on Palestinian statehood it is appropriate to ask if the United States will save Israel or will Israel save the United States.

After ten days visiting defense installations in Israel and talking to members of the general staff, my confidence about Israel's ability to defend itself has soared. This tiny nation of seven million is a miracle of technical marvels and remarkable spirit. Every weapon system this nation buys is Israelized. The Israeli drone is a composite of parts from several nations and Israeli avionics. The F-15 is an American plane adapted for the conditions in the Middle East neighborhood.

While some native Israelis lament the decrease in national spirit, the IDF education program instills in every draftee a sense of national history and purpose. It is inspiring to meet teenagers of eighteen and nineteen who are prepared to make battlefield decisions. One twenty-one-year old brigade commander in an elite unit is an articulate warrior, and at least as sophisticated as most officers ten years his senior in the United States.

In their book *Start-Up Nation*, Dan Senor and Saul Singer point out that these soldiers who are given great responsibility become desirable candidates for corporate recruiters. A highly decorated communications unit had three times the number of applicants as available billets. As one officer pointed out, these youngsters can secure some of the nation's most desirable jobs once the tour of duty is over.

As Israel is not saddled with a hydra-headed bureaucracy expanding to meet regulations and oversight committees, Israel's military force is lean, adaptable and alert. Incompetence at any point in the chain of command could be deadly.

The larger U.S. force structure and international missions militate against the adoption of an Israeli system. Nonetheless, there is much to be learned: the hair-trigger response to attacks of any kind; the ability to move ground troops quickly, and the surveillance tools are unquestionably a source of security strength. Israel, despite residing in a turbulent area with 250 million hostile Arabs, is a unique illustration of military preparedness.

There are those in the United States who believe Israel is a strategic liability. As long as we are committed to its survival, they say, American forces will be obliged to be in harm's way. Of course, what these detractors overlook is that Israel is the eyes and ears for the U.S., in a region fraught with extremists. In a real sense, Israel is the first line of defense in the war against radical Islam, a war that promises to be long and bloody. Israel is not merely an ally, it is a democratic nation in a despotic wasteland.

This war is not only likely to be long; it is a civilizational battle in which liberalism with its attendant values of individual rights, free markets, private property and the rule of law is pitted against an eighth century adherence to conformity and an opposition to personal liberty. Israel assumes the vanguard in this struggle, in part because of its location and, in part, because

its very survival is dependent on prevailing against its adversaries.

To return to the question of whether the U.S. can save Israel or whether Israel can save the U.S. is to realize that the relationship is symbiotic. The U.S. needs Israel as a first line of defense, a barrier against the expansion of radical Islam; Israel needs the U.S. for technical advances and the assertion of international power. If the day

comes when the U.S. believes Israel can be set adrift, international equilibrium will be permanently disrupted. Israel is for the U.S. a listening post in a world where intelligence is critical for security. As political currents are roiled by expressions of regional dismay and religious orthodoxy, U.S. interests are uncertain. This condition, perhaps more than any other, explains why the U.S. needs this extraordinary ally in the Kingdom of David.