

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 28, 2020

Dr. Mark T. Esper
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Esper:

We support the Department of Defense's efforts to implement the 2018 National Defense Strategy, including its emphasis on building a more lethal force and strengthening America's alliances and partnerships. In support of these objectives, we urge you to establish a U.S.-Israel Operations-Technology Working Group.

U.S. defense cooperation with Israel is certainly already deep and broad. However, despite laudable ongoing efforts, dangerous U.S. military capability gaps continue to emerge that more systematic and institutionalized U.S.-Israel early cooperative research and development could have prevented.

Israel is the ideal partner for such an arrangement. Israel represents America's closest and most reliable ally in the Middle East. Israel also exhibits an innovation agility and sense of urgency that can help catalyze U.S. defense programs. Not only does Israel possess one of the world's most effective militaries, it is also a technology superpower. Indeed, the Israeli defense innovation sector is a global leader in many of the technologies important to our warfighters that you highlighted in your January 24, 2020, public remarks.

In its *FY 2020 National Defense Authorization Act Report (S. Rept. 116-48)*, the Senate Armed Services Committee noted the value of cooperative research and development efforts with Israel and recognized the potential for improvement. In fact, the committee tasked the department to provide a report no later than March 1, 2020, on enhanced cooperative research and development opportunities with Israel focused on emerging or advanced technologies.

We need a permanent and dedicated forum for the two defense establishments to share intelligence-informed military capabilities requirements in a systematic manner. A U.S.-Israel Operations-Technology Working Group could develop combined U.S.-Israel plans to research, develop, procure, and field systems as quickly and affordably as possible to meet U.S. and Israeli warfighter requirements.

In our view, such a working group should be led by the Department of Defense and Israel's Ministry of Defense, with important contributions from the Department of State, Defense Intelligence Agency, and their Israeli counterparts.

We have a national security and moral imperative to make sure our warfighters never encounter a more technologically advanced foe. A U.S.-Israel Operations-Technology Working Group could help make sure that never happens.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter of national security.

Sincerely,



Tom Cotton
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator