



# ***ISRAEL MATTERS!***

Publication of the Israel Affairs Committee of Temple Beth Sholom  
1809 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT 06517-1401



Issue Number 87  
January 2015

## **Poll: Number of Israelis Viewing Obama as 'Positive' or 'Neutral' Drops Sharply**

### **Briton Hailed as 'Godfather' of IDF Reburied in Israel**

The ashes of a British World War One veteran who became a Jewish hero were reburied after a ceremony at a museum near the city of Netanya. Born in 1867, John Henry Patterson gained hero status in Israel for leading Jewish fighters during WW1, becoming a passionate Zionist.

Attending the event, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called him the "godfather" of the Israeli army. Mr Netanyahu's father was a friend of Patterson and the PM's brother, Yonathan, was named in honor of him. Before commanding Jewish soldiers, Patterson was a big-game hunter in Africa.

For his role in WW1, Patterson is credited as being the first commander to lead Jewish forces on to the field of battle for two millennia, making him an important figure in the history of Zionism. The Jewish Legion, which Patterson commanded, was the basis for what became the Israel Defense Forces, said Netanyahu.

In his later years, Patterson worked for the creation of a Jewish state. He died in 1947. One of his fellow fighters, Zeev Jabotinsky, who became a leading Zionist, said: "In all of Jewish history we have never had a Christian friend as understanding and devoted."

The remains of Patterson, and his wife, were laid to rest at Moshav Avichail, a museum established by Jewish Legion veterans. According to his grandson it was one of his final wishes to be interred alongside men he commanded. [bbcnews]

The percentage of Israelis who believe President Barack Obama has either a "positive" or a "neutral" view of Israel has fallen steeply in the two years since his visit to Israel in the spring of 2012, according to a Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies (BESA) survey released during December.

Of the respondents, 37 % said Obama has a "positive" position toward Israel, and an equal number said he had a "negative" attitude toward the country. Another 24% said he was "neutral."

In 2012, some 51% of the respondents of a similar BESA poll said Obama had "positive" attitudes toward Israel and another 32% believed he was "neutral." The telephone survey, released in advance of a recent BESA conference on America's standing in the world, was conducted from November 16-21 among a proportional sample of 529 adult respondents by Magar Mochot. The poll reflected a 4.5% margin of error.

According to the survey, 52% of the respondents believe Obama's policy regarding the Israel-Palestinian conflict has been "bad," while 50% disapproved of his policies toward Iran and 47% said the same about his policies regarding Islamic State. Some 65% of the respondents said America's position in the Middle East has been weakened or seriously weakened since Obama took office in 2009, while 24% believe America's position has remained unchanged and 11% think it has gotten stronger.

Along with thinking that the US position in the region has been weakened, some 68% believe America's standing in the region influences Israel's position. Likewise, 63% believe that if American involvement in the Middle East was reduced, it would have an adverse impact on Israel.

Close relations with the US was ranked second overall among the most important factors for Israel's security, with Israel's military power ranked first. Ninety-one percent believe close relations with the US are important.

While 62% of the public believes peace with the Palestinians is an important determinant of the country's security, some 48% say the same thing about the settlements.

Somewhat counter-intuitively, Iran was listed after terrorism, the Israel-Palestinian conflict and radical Islam as a significant or very significant threat to Israel's existential interests. Nevertheless, some 53% of the public believes Israel should attack Iran if diplomatic efforts fail to stop its nuclear pursuit, while 47% are opposed. If the US disapproved of such

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an attack, the number of Israelis who would support it drops from 53% to 45%, while those who would oppose it if the US objects jumps to 55%.

Nearly 75% of the sample believe the US would come to Israel's aid in the "moment of truth, and a similar number feel the US is a loyal ally of Israel. While 58% attribute US support of Israel to Israel's role as a strategic partner, another 37% said it was due to the clout of American Jewry. Regarding American Jewry, 79% said they believe US Jews feel close or very close to Israel.

Yael Bloch-Elkon, who co-directed the poll, said it indicates that "despite the fact that Israelis are deeply disconcerted about President Obama's Middle East policies with regards to Israel-Palestinian affairs, regional uprisings, and Iran – the Israeli public remains one of the most pro-American communities in the world. Overwhelming majorities view the US and Israel as having similar strategic interests in the Middle East, see the US as Israel's loyal ally, and as a friend that will come to Israel's aid in times of trouble." [JPost]

## Orthodox Union 'Adopts' Family of Murdered Druze Officer

The Orthodox Union (OU) was moved by the story of Zidan Seif, the 30-year-old Druze police officer who was murdered by terrorists during the recent attack at the Jerusalem synagogue in Har Nof when he tried to stop their attack in which they murdered four Jews.

Rabbi Avi Berman, Director General of the Orthodox Union in Israel, recently visited the Seif family home in the town of Yanuh-Jat in the Galilee.

Rabbi Berman told the family of the strong desire on behalf of Jewish communities from the United States to thank them for their son's heroics and express their sympathy, and added, "Dozens of rabbis, donors and members of the communities asked me to come here and thank you on their behalf to your wonderful family who raised a man who sacrificed his life for others."

Zidan's family told Rabbi Berman of their son's special character and how he always wanted to help those in need. Towards the end of the visit, Rabbi Berman told the family members that OU had decided to help out the family as much as possible, including commemorating Zidan's name.

Rabbi Berman told the family that he served with Druze in the IDF and always knew there was a close bond between the two peoples "but the story of Zidan's death added a special feeling that is now stronger than any previous knowledge," he added.

[Ynetnews]

## Congress Enshrines Israel in a New Class of Ally

With the recent passage of the US-Israel Strategic Partnership Act, Congress created a new legal category of partnership specifically for the State of Israel. Declared a major strategic partner – a designation held by no other country – the law seeks to establish a new framework within the category that will enhance cooperation across industries, with a focus on defense technologies.

The designation is an upgrade for Israel from "major non-NATO ally," the country's legal status as a US ally since 1988. The president is authorized, the law reads, to "share and exchange with Israel research, technology, intelligence, information, equipment, and personnel that will advance US national security interests and enhance US-Israel scientific cooperation."

The law calls for an expanded role for Israel with NATO.

Now headed to President Obama's desk, the Act was authored by Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Florida), Ted Deutch (D-Florida), Ed Royce (R-California) and Eliot Engel (D-New York), and Sens. Barbara Boxer (D-California) and Roy Blunt (R-Missouri).

The House vote was for a Senate version of the bill. Both senators Barbara Boxer and Roy Blunt, who sponsored the Senate bill, hailed the House's vote. Hill aides said they expect the president to sign the Act into law. The White House declined to comment following the Act's passage.

"Israel is a bright light in a very, very dark region," Eliot Engel said on the House floor shortly before the vote. "This legislation names Israel as a major strategic partner, demonstrating that our relationship is not transactional. It's not assistance-based," said Engel. In addition, Engel said the bill will "build on our robust defense cooperation ... ramp up US-Israel collaboration on cybersecurity, expand US-Israel energy cooperation, and reaffirm our commitment to Israel's ... qualitative military edge."

The president is given new authorization to grant assistance to cooperative efforts on energy, water, homeland security, agriculture and alternative fuel technologies. The act also authorizes an increase of \$200 million in the value of U.S. weapons held in Israel, to a total of \$1.8 billion. This stockpile, intended for use by U.S. forces in the event of a crisis, can also be used by Israel in the event of an emergency with Israel reimbursing the U.S. for any weapons used.

"A Hamas plot to kill scores of Israelis was just uncovered, while a regime in Tehran seeks to acquire a nuclear warhead and the missiles to deliver it. All this while ISIS is at Israel's front doorstep," said Royce, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. "That is why the legislation is so important." [Arutz Sheva]