

Security First:

U.S. Priorities in Israeli-Palestinian Peacemaking

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In-Depth Reports

This Washington Institute Strategic Report argues that the Obama administration should focus its early efforts in the Middle East peace process on expanding and improving the U.S.-led program to train Palestinian Authority (PA) security forces so that they are willing and able to fight terrorism.

Security First: U.S. Priorities in Israeli-Palestinian Peacemaking is the report of a three-person team of independent experts commissioned by the Institute to examine security issues in the Israeli-Palestinian relationship. Authors include J. D. Crouch II, former deputy national security advisor in the Bush administration; Walter B. Slocombe, former undersecretary of defense for policy in the Clinton administration, and Gen. (Ret.) Montgomery C. Meigs, former commander of NATO forces in Bosnia.

Only by proving its bona fides in countering terrorism can the PA give Israel confidence to eventually draw down its own forces in the West Bank, argues this report. Alternative ideas to circumvent the PA's current ineffectiveness, such as the deployment of international or NATO troops, are impractical and potentially counterproductive.

"The sine qua non of a durable peace agreement," the report states, "remains the development of a Palestinian security system capable of not only enforcing law and order but combating terrorist networks and cells." The authors offer a series of proposals for improving the current "train and equip" program, including transferring project supervision from the State Department to the Pentagon, increasing staff and funding for the initiative, and improving coordination with the Israel Defense Forces.

the Authors

J. D. Crouch II, currently a senior scholar at the National Institute for Public Policy, served as assistant to the president and deputy national security advisor from 2005 to 2007. Additionally, he has served as assistant secretary of defense for international security policy and as principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for international security policy.

Gen. (Ret.) Montgomery C. Meigs is visiting professor of strategy and military operations in the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University's Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service and former director of the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. General Meigs retired from the U.S. Army after thirty-five years of active service that included multiple tours in Bosnia and Operation Desert Storm.

Walter B. Slocombe is a 2004 Bush appointee to the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States regarding weapons of mass destruction. He has served as undersecretary of defense for policy and was senior advisor for national defense in Iraq's Coalition Provisional Authority in 2003. Previously, he held a number of positions in the Department of Defense, including principal deputy undersecretary for policy, deputy undersecretary for policy planning, and principal deputy assistant secretary for international security affairs.

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