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## Congress of the United States House of Representatives

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NATO PARLIMENTARY ASSEMBLY

May 7, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

I write to express my profound outrage regarding reports that the State Department is delaying vital ammunition deliveries to Israel during a time of war, while also holding in limbo a crucial direct commercial sale of 6,500 Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs).<sup>1</sup> As Hamas seeks the complete eradication of the Jewish people, and Israelis live under existential threat from Iran and its proxies, the Administration's decision to delay weapons sales and deliveries to Israel tells the world that our nation's commitment to defend our democratic allies from Foreign Terrorist Organizations and State Sponsors of Terror is hollow and unreliable.

On May 5, 2024, *Axios* reported that the Biden Administration had stopped a weapons shipment destined for the Israeli military.<sup>2</sup> It appears the Administration, which failed to inform Congress, refused even to notify their Israeli counterparts of this reversal, as "officials [were] sent scrambling to understand why the shipment was held."<sup>3</sup> On May 6, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the Biden Administration is delaying the sale of 6,500 JDAMs to Israel.<sup>4</sup> The next day, *Politico* reported that the Administration intended to "send a political message to Israel" by neglecting to move the sale forward and delaying weapons shipments.<sup>5</sup> The "political message" the Administration is sending is that U.S. support for our allies is wavering. This message will not be lost on Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and the many other terrorist extremist groups in the region that do Iran's bidding. It will be heard as well in Moscow, Beijing, and Pyongyang.

These unprecedented delays harm workers in my district and could have long-term ramifications for the U.S. defense industrial base. As you are aware, JDAMs are manufactured in the Saint Louis area, which I represent in Congress. This critical platform converts unguided "dumb" bombs into

<sup>1</sup><https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/u-s-delays-sending-precision-weapons-to-israel-253f12f0>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.axios.com/2024/05/05/israel-us-ammunition-shipment-hold>

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/u-s-delays-sending-precision-weapons-to-israel-253f12f0>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.politico.com/news/2024/05/07/us-concerns-over-israels-gaza-policy-led-to-weapons-holdup-00156528>

highly accurate guided weapons, capable of precise strikes—a remarkable and cost-effective capability that allows our partners to strike enemy targets while minimizing unintended damage. I am proud that engineers and manufacturing workers in the Saint Louis area are responsible for building this game-changing guidance kit for the U.S. military, as well as the militaries of partner countries on the frontlines of conflict from Europe to the Middle East. I am gravely concerned that delaying the sale of 6,500 JDAMs to Israel, which I understand has been in-process for months, will hurt Saint Louis’s ability to maintain and increase production of the JDAMs in the future.

U.S. security assistance to Israel, one of our staunchest allies, is a pillar of our bilateral relationship and a core component of increased regional stability. The Administration’s decision to delay weapons sales and deliveries to Israel in wartime upends decades of precedent and undermines deterrence against Iran and its terrorist proxies. Our obligations to Israel are clearly laid out in the 10-year Memorandum of Understanding the Obama Administration negotiated in 2016, under which the U.S. made historic commitments to increase security assistance to Israel. The Administration rightly celebrated the agreement for reflecting the United States’ “unshakeable commitment to Israel’s security.”<sup>6</sup> Congress has fully funded this MOU every year since it was signed and most recently appropriated a supplemental security package for the defense of Israel. Yet, in direct contradiction of Congressional intent and the commitments the United States made under the landmark 2016 MOU, it is now the Biden Administration’s position to threaten the safety and security of our strongest ally in the Middle East in order to appease terrorist sympathizers and send a political message.

Further, I am horrified that the United States would choose to undercut our ally Israel while it is engaged in difficult negotiations with Hamas. Just weeks ago, Iran launched an unprecedented missile and drone attack on Israel directly from Iranian soil, and Israel continues to experience consistent, escalatory attacks from Hezbollah. I am also dismayed that Congress learned of these delays from the press, and not from the Administration. I respectfully ask that you reply to the following questions not later than May 20, 2024, with input from the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and Secretary of Defense as appropriate:

1. What were the contents of the weapons shipment that the Administration halted, as reported in *Axios* on May 5, 2024?
2. Have other deliveries been held or delayed? Please provide a full accounting of all shipments currently being held or delayed, and the weapons and equipment included in any such shipments.
3. Did you notify Israel before delaying planned deliveries of security assistance?
4. Has the Administration demanded any actions from Israel in return for the release of these weapons?
5. What have you communicated to Israel regarding the reason for the hold and timeline for releasing weapons shipments?
6. Why has the Administration failed to move forward with the notification process for the sale of 6,500 JDAMs to Israel?
7. When will the Administration resume the notification process?

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<sup>6</sup><https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/14/fact-sheet-memorandum-understanding-reached-israel>

8. Have you engaged with stakeholders in the defense industrial base regarding the impact of delays to this sale?

Thank you for your attention to this matter and your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ann Wagner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Ann Wagner  
Member of Congress

CC: Mr. Jake Sullivan  
Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Lloyd Austin  
Secretary of Defense  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301