

Aid to Palestine or Israel? Ottawa Delivered Millions in Aid to Palestinian Authority to Advance Israeli Interests

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A recently uncovered government document confirms that Ottawa has delivered millions of dollars in aid to the Palestinian Authority in a bid to advance Israel's interests. The internal memorandum also sheds light on Canada's efforts to build a security apparatus to protect the Palestinian Authority from popular disgust over its compliance in the face of ongoing Israeli settlement building.

Last week Postmedia's Lee Berthiaume reported on a Canadian International Development Agency [note outlining Israel's desire](#) for Canada to continue its \$300 million five-year "aid" program to the Palestinians, which the Conservatives threatened to sever after the PA pursued UN statehood last fall.

"There have been increasing references in the past months during high-level bilateral meetings with the Israelis about the importance and value they place on Canada's assistance to the Palestinian Authority, most notably in security/justice reform," reads the November 2nd 2012 note signed by CIDA president Margaret Biggs. "The Israelis have noted the importance of Canada's contribution to the relative stability achieved through extensive security co-operation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority."

The heavily censored note suggests the goal of the Canadian "aid" is to protect a corrupt PA from popular backlash. Biggs explains that "the emergence of popular protests on the Palestinian street against the Palestinian Authority is worrying and the Israelis have been imploring the international donor community to continue to support the Palestinian Authority."

These recent revelations from CIDA confirm the highly politicized nature of Canadian aid to the Palestinians. After Hamas won legislative elections in January 2006 the Conservatives made Canada the first country (after Israel) to [cut off funding to the PA](#).

When Hamas officials were ousted from the Palestinian unity government in June 2007, the Conservatives immediately contributed \$8 million "[in direct support](#) to the new government." Then in December 2007 the Conservatives announced a five-year \$300 million aid program to the Palestinians, which was largely designed to serve Israel's interests.

As a Saint John Telegraph-Journal headline explained at the time: "Canada's aid to Palestine benefits Israel, foreign affairs minister says."

In January 2008 Maxime Bernier, then Canada's foreign minister, said: "We are doing that [providing aid to the PA] because we want Israel to be able to live in peace and security with its neighbors."

Most of the Canadian aid money has gone to building up a Palestinian security force overseen by a US general. The immediate impetus of the Canadian aid was to create a Palestinian security force "to ensure that the PA maintains control of the West Bank against Hamas," as Canadian Ambassador to Israel Jon Allen was quoted as saying by the Canadian Jewish News.

American General Keith Dayton, in charge of organizing a 10,000-member Palestinian security force, even admitted that he was strengthening Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah against Hamas, telling a US audience in May 2009 his force was "working against illegal Hamas activities." According to Al Jazeera, between 2007 and early 2011 PA security forces arrested some [10,000 suspected Hamas](#) supporters in the West Bank.

The broader aim of the US-Canada-Britain initiated Palestinian security reform was to build a force to patrol the West Bank and Gaza. In a 2011 profile of Canadian Lieutenant-Colonel Ron Allison, "Dayton's chief of liaison in the West Bank" for a year, Allison's hometown newspaper the Times & Transcript reported: "The Dayton team was concerned with enhancing security on the West Bank of Palestine and was all geared towards looking after and ensuring the security of Israel."

"[We don't provide anything](#) to the Palestinians," Dayton told the Associated Press in June 2009, "unless it has been thoroughly coordinated with the State of Israel and they agree to it." For instance, Israel's notorious internal intelligence agency, the Shin Bet, [vets all of the Palestinian](#) recruits, according to US government reports.

The Israelis supported Dayton's force as a way to keep the West Bank population under control. Like all colonial authorities throughout history, Israel looked to compliant locals to take up the occupation's security burden.

Writing in the July 2011 London Review of Books, Adam Shatz [detailed](#) how "The PA already uses the American-trained National Security Force to undermine efforts by Palestinians to challenge the occupation."

He continued: "It is an extraordinary arrangement: the security forces of a country under occupation are being subcontracted by third parties outside the region to prevent resistance to the occupying power, even as that power continues to grab more land. "This is, not surprisingly, a source of considerable anger and shame in the West Bank."

The Palestinian security force is largely trained in Jordan at the U.S.-built International Police Training Center (established to train Iraqi security after the 2003 invasion). In October 2009, The Wall Street Journal reported: "[Palestinian] [recruits are trained](#) in Jordan by Jordanian police, under the supervision of American, Canadian and British officers. The number of military trainers in the West Bank varied slightly but in mid-2010, [eighteen Canadian troops](#) worked with six British and ten US soldiers under Dayton's command."

"The [Canadian contribution is invaluable](#)," explained Dayton to The Maple Leaf, the monthly publication of the Canadian army. Canadians are particularly useful because, Dayton said,

“US personnel have travel restrictions when operating in the West Bank. But, our British and Canadian members do not.”

Calling them his “eyes and ears” Dayton added: “The Canadians ... are organized in teams we call road warriors, and they move around the West Bank daily visiting Palestinian security leaders, gauging local conditions.”

Part of the U.S. Security Coordinator office in Jerusalem, the Canadian military mission in the West Bank (dubbed Operation PROTEUS) includes Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers as well as officials from the foreign ministry, Justice Canada and the Canadian Border Services Agency.

In a September 2010 interview with The Jerusalem Post, Peter Kent, then Canada’s deputy foreign minister, said Operation PROTEUS was Canada’s “[second largest deployment after Afghanistan](#)” and it receives “most of the money” from the five-year \$300 million Canadian “aid” program to the PA.

During a visit to the Middle East in January 2012, foreign minister John Baird told The Globe and Mail he was “[incredibly thrilled](#)” by the West Bank security situation, which he said benefited Israel.

In effect, Canada has helped to build a security apparatus to protect a corrupt PA led by Mahmoud Abbas, whose electoral mandate expired in January 2009, but whom the Israeli government prefers over Hamas.

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