

Running Around With the World Runners

WHAT I'VE DISCOVERED, RUNNING THE WORLD FOR A DAY

It's hard to believe that it's taken me so long, but I have finally figured it out. There's a good reason why we Jews control the world: from the currency to the banks, from the media to the governments. It's not as much because we're good at running things (although we've been doing a really good job at it with a few brief exceptions), it's more based on the fact that no one else wanted to do it. Running the world is an important job—someone has to do it—but no one else volunteered for the job because it's mind-numbingly boring.

As I've come to understand, global domination has almost nothing to do with shadowy figures huddled together in dungeons deep underground as bolts of lightning streak across the sky, despite the fact that the entertainment industry (also controlled by us) often portrays it as such. In reality, lobbying involves little more than running down hallways only to rush in and out of meetings with top government officials, held in non-air-conditioned conference rooms (mostly because tax dollars are busy being spent on studies to determine the self-esteem of turtles whose shells are painted light green versus others whose shells are painted pink).

How do I suddenly know so much about running the world? All it took was to follow a Jewish lobby group on one of their trips to lobby members of Congress.

The Objective: Get additional financial

support for Israel's missile defense system added to the US defense budget, to the tune of \$635.7 million.

The Details: Including \$72 million for the Iron Dome (which defends against rockets and small projectiles), \$150 million for David's Sling (which defends against ballistic missiles launched from distances of medium to long-range) and \$120 million for the Arrow III (which is designed to

The Targets: A dozen top senators and congressmen who head the committees responsible for foreign affairs, armed services and appropriations.

The group under the aegis of the US-Israel Security Alliance, that was spearheaded in 2012 (when the Iron Dome made its debut during the first Gaza conflict) by Ezra Friedlander, CEO of The Friedlander Group, a man I first met when he was just 15 years old. (I was exactly eight days old on that particular morning, and while I don't recall the precise details of the incident, photographs of our rendezvous show me looking rather unhappy, while young Ezra got to eat lox for breakfast.)

Co-chairing this mission were Leon Goldenberg, Sol Goldner and Joseph Stamm, each of whom is a frequent guest to the halls of Congress, and who bring with themselves a perspec-

tive that has generally helped persuade members of Congress to maintain funding for these critical programs that ensure Israel's qualitative military edge, of vital importance to world domination.

The series of meetings began with lunch in Senator Rand Paul's office, where the senator joined us and listened to personal anecdotes about people who've lived under the Iron Dome. Mr. Stamm, the president and CEO of NYCHSRO/MedReview, Inc., related to Senator Paul about the time he was traveling on a bus when the sirens went off. "We had 20 seconds to get off the



Ezra Friedlander; Appropriations Committee Chair Senator Thad Cochran, Turx

take down the largest and most advanced missiles) with \$42.7 million for anti-tunnel technology (a project involving as many as 100 top anti-tunnel experts, most of their work remains classified).

The Team: Altogether the group comprised some 30 individuals from across the United States and beyond, even as far away as Dubai—because when it comes to lobbying we'll take anyone willing to do the job.

The Time: Full year of advocacy, with the final set of meetings taking place last week.

bus and run for safety,” he recalled.

At one point in the middle of the meeting with Senator Lindsey Graham, his phone started ringing and he remarked, “Never give your number to Trump,” referring to the time during the presidential campaign when Mr. Trump exposed the senator’s private cell phone number.

A seminal moment for the delegation came about when Leon Goldenberg asked Senator John Boozman, “How important are these missions to Washington?”

to which the senior senator from Arkansas replied, “The idea of individuals coming and talking to me, talking to my staff, talking to other members of Congress, there is really no substitute to that. So it’s really, really important.”

The last meeting of the day was with Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, who together with Senator Mark Kirk, are members of the Senate Armed Services Committee. They, in a bipartisan fashion, authored and secured a letter signed by 30 of their colleagues urging the full

Appropriations Committee to completely fund the \$635.7 million, which it subsequently did unanimously. The deal’s not done yet; it requires a full Senate vote and Obama’s signature—which was the objective of the lobbying effort: to have the Senate stand firm in light of Obama’s threat to veto the full funding.

What’s the difference between these two committees (Armed Services and Appropriations)? As Mr. Friedlander puts it, “Imagine you want to purchase something from the store. You get a list from your mother of items she approves, but she sends you to ask your father for the money. Your father says he’s ready to give you the funds, as long as your mother has given you a list of

approved items. That’s how those two committees work.”

After each meeting, the senators were presented with a commemorative *tzedakah* box, which according to law cannot exceed \$50 in value. (This applies to any gift to any member of Congress; it’s not just a law against *tzedakah* boxes.) The co-chairs took turns presenting the gift at the close of each meeting, while explaining that a \$600 million check would fit inside perfectly.

Another common theme, expressed by

activist is more effective than being a lobbyist as [the members of Congress] know you don’t have a chip in the game. They recognize that we’re there because this is what we strongly believe in. Lobbyists don’t always lobby for what they believe.

“When you call a local councilman because your streetlight is broken, they view it as if 50 people called, because that broken light affects everyone on the block. If you take a few hours to go to City Hall for a visit with the councilman, you probably represent 250 people.

When you go to Albany for lobbying, you’re actually taking an entire day off—a day you’re not getting paid for—and they view you as representing a thousand people. When Agudah goes up to Albany with 30-40 people, that’s representing 30,000 to 40,000 people. When you go to Washington, even if you drove down there, after gas and tolls that’s costing you \$200. If you go by train, that’s \$300 to \$400. If you fly in, that’s \$600 to \$700. If you stay overnight, that includes a

hotel stay. By now you represent a minimum of 2,500 people. When you come down with a group like ours, you represent 75,000 to 100,000 people.”

Reflecting back, Mr. Goldner remarked about what stood out the most from the trip. “What continues to amaze me is how bipartisan the support for Israel is, both in the House and in the Senate,” he declared. Well, good. Let’s hope it remains this way.

What I now know is that running the world isn’t all that glamorous. You can work on something for an entire year with hardly any recognition. I feel that until and unless some other group volunteers to do all the thanklessly tedious work involved, they have no right to complain. ●



Senator Rand Paul, Leon Goldenberg, Ezra Friedlander, Joseph B. Stamm

Mr. Stamm to various members of Congress, was that “the main reason why we are here is to give thanks and to hope that we can continue to have bipartisan support. The need for Congress to support us is more important than the support of the President of the United States.” At this point, the members of the mission wait to see whether the president agrees to sign the budget, which includes the funding for Israel’s defense.

Leon Goldenberg, who serves on the Board of Trustees for Agudath Israel of America, breaks down the effects of lobbying, and makes a distinction between lobbyists and what most of the members of our coalition were: activists. “Being an