

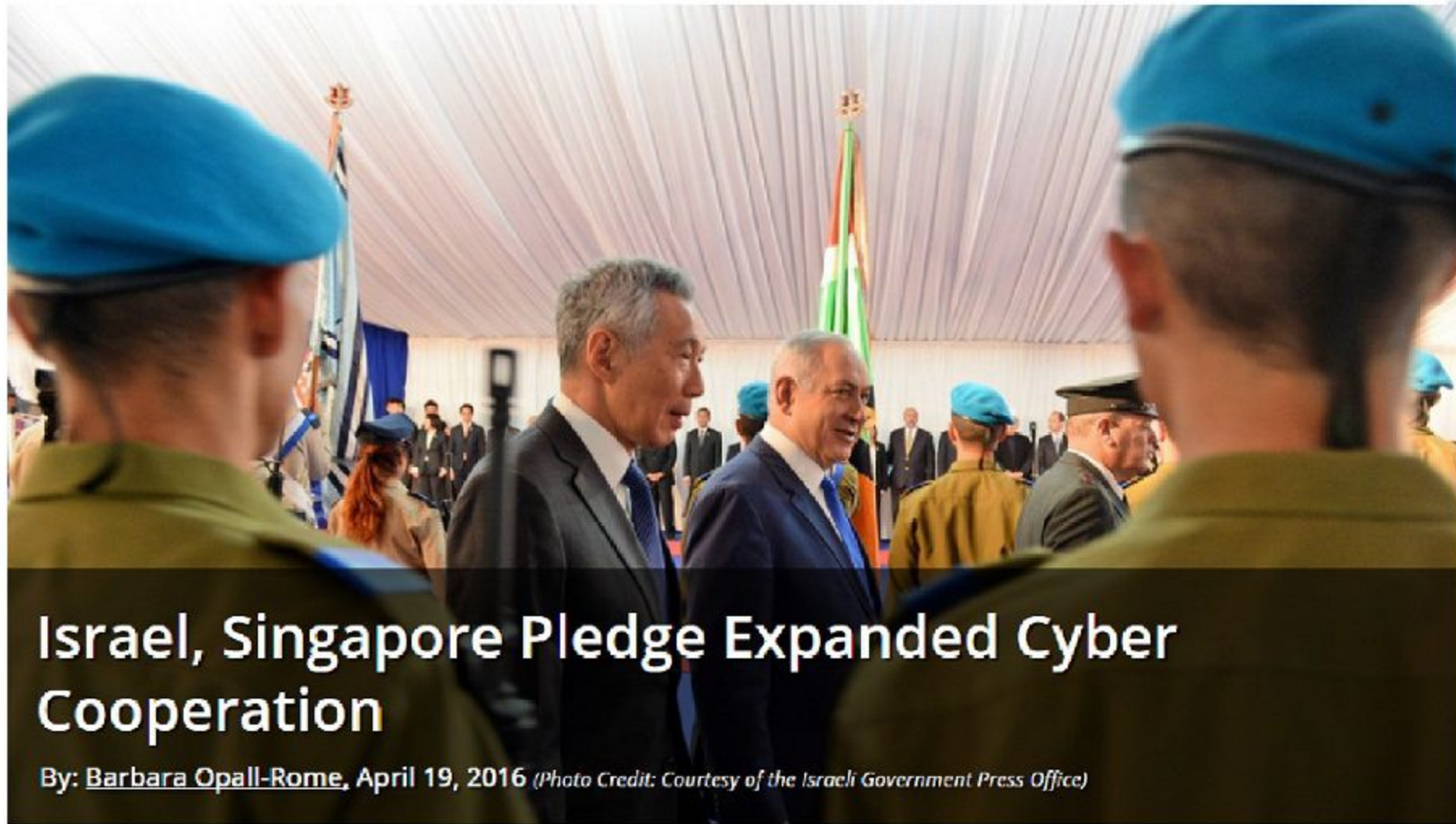
# SPACE & MISSILE DEFENSE

## SPECIAL MULTIMEDIA REPORT

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## Israel, Singapore Pledge Expanded Cyber Cooperation

By: [Barbara Opall-Rome](#), April 19, 2016 (Photo Credit: Courtesy of the Israeli Government Press Office)

JERUSALEM — Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his counterpart from Singapore, Lee Hsien Loong, pledged Tuesday to expand cyber defense cooperation and high-tech trade ties.

In the first ever visit here by a head of the southeast Asian republic, Lee publicly credited Israel for decades of traditionally secret military support and defense trade, vowing to strengthen ties across numerous sectors.

"It all started in fact with defense relations between us," Lee told Netanyahu at a Jerusalem press gathering. "We are very grateful to Israel for the assistance it granted us when independence was thrust upon us in August 1965 and when Singapore's security and survival were in doubt. You helped us, the Israel Defense Forces helped us to build up the Singapore Armed Forces when other countries turned us down."

Israeli defense officials and industry executives are traditionally closed-lipped — at Singapore's request, they say — but noted that defense and security ties preceded formal diplomatic relations codified in 1969. They estimated the extent of bilateral defense cooperation, which includes defense exports and joint R&D, at an annual average of \$500 million over the past decade.

In the early days of Singapore's independence, Israeli Air Force officers and local industry helped build the country's Air Command and Control Center and integrate Israeli air-to-air missiles on fighters procured from the US and other suppliers. Similar technical and conceptual experience was provided to Singapore's Navy and Ground Forces; and the two countries enjoy routine training across a spectrum of combat disciplines, sources here said.

"They are British-educated, impeccably professional and clearly the most competent military force in their region, despite their small size," retired Israeli Air Force Brig. Gen. Yalo Shavit said.

In recent years, the two defense establishments have cooperated on a range of programs from homeland security to cyber, including state-owned Israel Aerospace Industries' 2014 establishment of a cyber early warning research and development center in Singapore.

In their joint public remarks Tuesday, Netanyahu flagged the large 60-member delegation that accompanied Lee on his four-day visit to Israel.

"I think your arrival here reflects a coming-of-age of the relations between our two countries," the Israeli prime minister said. "We have so much in common. We are small nations that leave a very large imprint on the world scene."

Netanyahu said the two countries are "anchors of stability and strength in our respective regions" and likened Israel's transformation "to a technological powerhouse" to the economic success that has earned Singapore worldwide renown.

"Innovation and entrepreneurship have allowed us both to punch well above our weight," he said. Netanyahu added that through innovation and technology, Israel hopes to "do a great deal in addition to what we were already doing."

Lee said his last visit to Israel was as a young army officer in 1977 accompanying then-Singaporean Chief of Staff Gen. Winston Chu, who now serves as ambassador to Israel.

"I'm very happy to be back after all these many years ... and to see for myself developments in Israel," Lee said.

He noted that bilateral business ties are strong and are projected to become even stronger in the years ahead: "Our business-to-business ties are strong. Israel is the second largest contributor of foreign direct investments in Singapore from the Middle East, and we admire your technical prowess and ecosystem. You have the highest number of scientists, technicians, technologists and engineers per capita in the world. You have the third highest number of patents per capita, and I know that many Singaporean firms are interested in doing business with you."

Nevertheless, Lee said Singapore is watching "carefully from a distance the Israel-Palestine problem and the Middle East peace process, and the progress or lack of progress on these issues."

The Singaporean premier noted that his country is friends "with both Israel and Palestine" and urged both sides "to resume negotiations and make progress towards a just and durable solution to a long-standing and complex conflict."

He added: "We hope to see a two-state solution with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security one day."