



City of Miami Beach, 1700 Convention Center Drive, Miami Beach, Florida 33139, www.miamibeachfl.gov

COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the City Commission

FROM: Mayor Dan Gelber

DATE: October 18, 2023

SUBJECT: DISCUSS/TAKE ACTION RE: MIAMI BEACH FIRE DEPARTMENT DEPLOYMENT OF VOLUNTARY CITY FIREFIGHTERS TO ASSIST WITH EMERGENCY FIREFIGHTING AND/OR PARAMEDIC SERVICES IN ISRAEL.

Please place a discussion item on the October 18, 2023 City Commission agenda.

DISCUSS/TAKE ACTION

I have been advised that City Manager Hudak and Chief Virgil Fernandez are exploring participating in a potential State of Florida mission for Miami Beach Fire Department ("MBFD") firefighters and paramedics to assist in providing emergency response, recovery and mitigation services in Israel in the immediate future as part of the aid contemplated in Governor DeSantis' Executive Order No. 23-208 (Emergency management – Impacts of War in Israel). See EO 23-208, attached as Exhibit A.

The Fire Department is also exploring an informal mission to Israel comprised of MBFD personnel, either through an NGO or other mechanism, to provide MBFD personnel to "backfill" firefighting/paramedic positions in Israel that have been made vacant due to the deployment of the normal Israeli staff to military service relating to the Israeli war with Hamas, or to provide other services as needed. MBFD is currently working with Michael Caponi, the leader of an NGO, Global Empowerment Mission, who has tentatively agreed to provide air transport to and from Israel for MBFD personnel. Other details are currently being considered for action, should an independent City mission be authorized.

The Fire Department routinely deploys personnel to assist other jurisdictions with emergency services, whether it is in the context of hurricane disaster recovery efforts or humanitarian relief, such as a prior mission undertaken in Haiti following a devastating earthquake in that country.

I would like for the City Commission to (1) endorse this effort; (2) authorize the City Manager and MBFD to participate in any mission or program for voluntary assignment of MBFD firefighters or paramedics to provide emergency services in Israel; (3) authorize the City Manager to expend funds to facilitate rapid deployment of the MBFD mission to Israel; (4) to seek and accept donations or appropriations of funds and in-kind services to pay for the mission and/or to reimburse the City for funds expended; and (5) authorize MBFD to treat personnel who volunteer for, and ultimately serve in, Israel, as on-duty MBFD employees to ensure that any potential injuries and/or deaths to MBFD personnel while on this mission would result in the same benefits to the personnel and/or their beneficiaries as if they were responding to an on-duty emergency assignment in the City of Miami Beach.