



ISRAEL MATTERS!

Publication of the Israel Affairs Committee of Temple Beth Shalom
1809 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT 06517-1401



Issue Number 83
September 2014

Congress Approves Additional Iron Dome Funding

Netanyahu Thanks Diaspora Jews for 'Standing By Israel'



In a letter to Jewish communities around the world, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu thanked them for their support in the recent weeks.

In the letter, Netanyahu said that "The Jewish people always unites to meet challenges. The current period is no different. Over the past two months, beginning with the kidnapping and murder of three of our teenagers, through Operation Protective Edge, the support of Jewish communities around the world has been a source of great strength for the people of Israel.

"At the same time, we know this has been a difficult period for Jews around the world," Netanyahu continued. "Many of you have had to face aggressive protesters, and even violent anti-Semitism. In the name of the State of Israel and Israelis, I thank you for the protection you gave our just battle to restore long-term quiet and security that all Israelis deserve. I ask that you continue raising your voices to battle the lies that are aimed at Israel.

"Israel will, for its part, continue standing at your side, as you deal with hatred and intolerance. Jews everywhere should be able to live with pride, not fear. I have great faith in the Jewish people and in the justice of our cause," Netanyahu added. "I look forward to continuing to build our common future together with you." [Arutz Sheva]

Divided on other issues, U.S. lawmakers united in support of Israel with the Senate recently approving \$225 million for the Israeli Iron Dome missile defense system. The House followed by voting 395-8 in favor of the measure. Senate approval came as the chamber wrapped up work before going on its five-week summer recess.



The United States helped Israel create the missile defense system, which is credited with shooting down many Hamas rockets in the current Gaza conflict. "We could not go out for a month or five weeks and not act to help the Israelis replenish their supply of Iron Dome missiles," GOP Sen. John McCain of Arizona told reporters.

Prior to the vote, Republican Sen. Tom Coburn of Oklahoma blocked the Iron Dome funding requested by Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel because it would add to the budget deficit. McCain and Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina then spoke to Coburn about the critical moment facing Israel, Graham said, adding that "to his credit, he let it go." With Coburn's objection gone, the measure passed swiftly by unanimous consent just as the latest attempt at a cease-fire in the Gaza conflict was disintegrating.

McCain called for the House and President Obama to approve the funding to show the people of Israel that "we will stand with them and that we will provide them with what they need in order to defend themselves."

The emergency funds will restock Israel's Iron Dome system with interceptor missiles. The funding is part of the administration's request of \$3.1 billion for military assistance to Israel. Congress appropriated \$235 million to Iron Dome last year. Although the original funding request was for about \$176 million for the system for 2015, lawmakers increased the amount.

The Iron Dome missile defense system performed extremely well during the Gaza fighting. It has prevented innumerable missiles from randomly striking populated areas. Perversely, the success created a problem in the ongoing propaganda war. Israel's civilian casualties are extremely low compared to those in Gaza, which are compounded by Hamas' strategy of using civilians as human shields.

(Continued)

(Continued from page 1)

Israel uses the Iron Dome system only against rockets headed toward populated areas. If one appears to be headed for an unpopulated area, the system does not activate. The name Iron Dome evokes an image of a protective bubble over a city. In practice, it targets incoming rockets and fires an interceptor missile to destroy them in the air.

Each battery has a firing-control radar to identify targets. It also has a portable missile launcher. The system is easily transportable, with just a few hours needed to relocate and set up. The interceptor missile is highly maneuverable. It is almost 10 feet long, has a diameter of about 6 inches and weighs 198 pounds, according to the security analysis group IHS Jane's 2012 report. The warhead is believed to carry 24 pounds of high explosives, and its range is from 2½ miles to 43 miles.

The Iron Dome system confronts multiple threats simultaneously, in all weather conditions, the military said. Israel credits "breakthrough technology" and the system's radar. "The radar detects a rocket launch and passes information regarding its path to the control center, which calculates the predicted point of impact," the IDF said. "If this location justifies an interception, a missile is fired to intercept the rocket. The payload of the interceptor missile explodes near the rocket, in a place that is not expected to cause injuries."

In 2014, the United States provided \$235 million for Iron Dome research, development and production, according to the Congressional Research Service. Each Iron Dome battery costs \$50 million, IHS Jane's said. A missile costs at least \$62,000, Israeli officials said.

Other countries have expressed interest in buying the system, including the United States, South Korea, and several NATO countries in Europe, The Jerusalem Post has reported. [CNN, Yahoo, The Minority Report]



*Dear soldier
Prior to every assignment, prior
to each operation*

We just wanted to tell you –

Thanks!

Kol Hakavod

We are here behind you.

We appreciate all you are doing.

We trust you to ensure our future.

You are our hope – you are our hero!!!

*“Bayamim HaHem Bazman
HazeH”*

From us,

Your family

Your classmates

*Am Israel (millions of boys and
girls, men and women)*

*The Jewish people in the
Diaspora*

*Jews from 1900 years of exile
who dreamt about you*

3000 years of heritage

*Your children and grand-
children – the generation of the
future*

Israelis Attend Funerals of Lone Soldiers

A crowd estimated at 30,000 flooded the funeral of American lone soldier Max Steinberg, who was killed in Gaza. Steinberg, a native of Los Angeles came to Israel to enlist in the Israel Defense Forces several months after visiting for the first time on a Birth-right Israel trip. He was killed in Gaza during Operation Protective Edge when the armored personnel carrier he was riding in with six other members of the Golani Brigade was attacked by Hamas explosives. He was a sharpshooter in the elite brigade.

Steinberg's parents and siblings traveled to Israel for the funeral, which was held at the Har Herzl military cemetery. His mother, Evie, told Israel's Channel 2 upon her arrival at Ben Gurion Airport that her son was "a hero."

U.S. Ambassador to Israel, Dan Shapiro, who spoke at the funeral, said in a later Facebook post that the number of attendees at the funeral "was an amazing show of support and love, which gave real comfort to his wonderful family."

Steinberg's funeral followed the funeral at Haifa's Sde Yehoshua military cemetery for lone soldier Sean Carmeli, a native of Texas. Some 20,000 people attended the funeral after social media sites called on Israelis to attend since the lone soldier did not have much family in Israel. Maccabi Haifa, Carmeli's favorite soccer team, asked its fans on Facebook to "accompany him on his final road and represent us as one family."

A lone soldier from Lyon in France, Jordan Bensemhoun, was buried in Ashkelon's military cemetery. Some 6,000 people, most from the large French-Israeli community, attended the funeral, despite warnings against large gatherings in the city, which is under frequent rocket fire from Gaza.

[JewishJournal]

Israel Arms Itself for New Gaza Battle - On the Legal Front

First, Israel's Iron Dome air defense system protected millions from rocket attacks. Now, Israel is assembling a "Legal Iron Dome" to defend itself against potential allegations of war crimes in Gaza

For Israel, the threat of another fight -- not on the battlefield but in the courts -- recently materialized with the appointment of a UN committee to investigate "all violations of international human rights and humanitarian law" in the occupied Palestinian territories since mid-June.

Israel has been engaged in a bloody conflict in Gaza which has its roots in the kidnapping and murder of three Jewish teenagers on June 12 that triggered a sweeping arrest campaign across the West Bank.

The investigators are due to present their findings to the UN Human Rights Council in March 2015, but Israel has already denounced its chairman, William Schabas, as an anti-Israeli, and its findings as inevitably biased.

But neither was it surprised. From the start of Operation Protective Edge, which began on July 8, the army has been preparing the ground for any legal fallout by forming its own committee of military experts.

"We created this investigative committee after Operation Pillar of Defence," Captain Arye Shalimar told AFP, referring to an eight-day confrontation with Gaza militants in November 2012.

"This time we activated it during the operation to document each event, particularly the most tragic in which lots of civilians were killed," he told AFP.

"The cornerstone of our work is principally provided by military intelligence, which examines each operation ahead of time," he said.

"For example, if a house in Gaza was used to fire a rocket on Israel, then according to the laws of war, it becomes a military position and therefore a legitimate target."

"If we're wrong, we should admit our mistake and learn from it."

- Avoiding Goldstone 2 -

Israel had boycotted a previous UN committee which looked into Operation Cast Lead, a major 22-day operation over New Year 2009, which killed 1,440 Palestinians and 13 Israelis.

Published in autumn 2009, the so-called Goldstone Report accused both Israel and Hamas of war crimes and "possibly crimes against humanity".

As this is written, the current conflict has killed more than 1,960 Palestinians and 67 people on the Israeli side, although a five-day truce is in force to give negotiators

time to broker a longer-term ceasefire.

According to UN figures, 72 percent of the Palestinians who died were civilians.

Israel has been accused all over the world of inflicting disproportionate casualties and collectively punishing Gaza's 1.8 million residents for rocket attacks perpetrated by hundreds of militants.

Braced for fresh accusations, Justice Minister Tzipi Livni has appointed a team of legal experts to draw up not only a line of defense, but also Israel's line of attack.

Israel says Hamas caused civilian casualties by using innocent women and children as human shields.

And it has defended its use of force as proportionate, saying no democracy could allow armed militants to threaten and attack millions of its people.

In a move designed to show Israel is capable of investigating itself, the attorney general's office has said it will investigate circumstances in which Palestinian civilians were needlessly killed.

- Foreign Arrest Warrants -

The Palestinians, who in 2012 obtained non-member observer status at the United Nations, say they will soon try to haul Israelis before the International Criminal Court for alleged war crimes.

For Israel, perhaps the most serious outcome would be for foreign courts to issue arrest warrants for military officers or even politicians.

In 2009, a British court issued an arrest warrant for Livni, one of the most moderate voices in the Israeli government, after Palestinian activists made an application over her role as foreign minister during the conflict of New Year 2009.

Britain has since amended the law to ensure that private arrest warrants for such offences would first have to be approved by the chief prosecutor.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has lashed out at the UN Human Rights Council, accusing it of granting "legitimacy to terror organizations" by investigating Israel and not mass killings perpetrated elsewhere in the Middle East.

Hamas, whose activities will also be investigated by the commission, welcomed its creation and called for it to start work as soon as possible.

Schabas has urged Israel to cooperate with the inquiry.

"It's in Israel's interest to be there in that discussion and give its version of the events. If it doesn't, it leaves an unfortunate one-sided picture of it," he told Israel's Channel 2 television.

[AFP]