



Iron Dome for America?

The recent wave of unexplained [drone sightings](#) across several U.S. states has reignited debates over the nation's airspace security. Reports of unidentified drones in New Jersey, Maryland, Massachusetts, and other states have prompted calls for a more robust defense system. These sightings have coincided with renewed discussions about implementing a U.S. version of Israel's Iron Dome missile-defense system, a proposal championed by President-elect Donald Trump and recently echoed by his national security adviser pick, Congressman Mike Waltz.



AP Images
Israeli Iron Dome system

Campaign Promise

During his campaign, Trump made airspace security a central pillar of his national defense agenda, frequently referencing Israel's Iron Dome as a model for the United States. Besides being a recurring topic at his rallies, the proposal was prominently featured on his campaign website as one of his "core promises to Make America Great Again":

Prevent World War Three, restore peace in Europe and in the Middle East, and build a great Iron Dome missile defense shield over our entire country — all made in America.

This vision builds on his broader platform of "America First" defense priorities, promising to reduce reliance on foreign technology while increasing domestic production of defense systems. However, the logic of the promise raises questions. If the Trump administration is truly able to restore peace, the rationale for investing in a costly, large-scale missile defense system becomes less clear.

How Israel's Iron Dome Works

[Israel's Iron Dome](#), developed with substantial financial and technological support from the United States, is considered one of the most effective missile-defense systems in the world. The system uses radar to detect incoming short-range rockets, artillery, and drones. Once the radar identifies a threat, an interceptor missile battery launches missiles to neutralize targets in mid-air, minimizing the risk of collateral damage on the ground. [According](#) to the developer, Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, the Iron Dome has achieved a success rate of more than 90 percent in intercepting projectiles, protecting densely populated areas and critical infrastructure from enemy attacks.

Waltz's Advocacy

Representative Mike Waltz (R-Fla.) has emerged as a leading voice in the call for a U.S. Iron Dome. Speaking on CBS's *Face the Nation* on Sunday, Waltz highlighted the "gaps in our agencies" and the need for a comprehensive defense strategy.

<https://twitter.com/mtracey/status/1868462696451940771>

Waltz argued that the United States needs to be able to counter "adversarial actions" beyond traditional



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missile threats, specifically referencing the role drones may play in future conflicts. His comments have added momentum to Trump's Iron Dome proposal, framing it as a solution to a rapidly evolving threat landscape.

Criticism

Critics argue that implementing an Iron Dome-like system across the United States is both technically unfeasible and economically impractical. Joe Cirincione, writing for [Defense One](#) in July, describes Trump's proposal as "the same old missile-defense snake oil," noting that despite decades of effort and over \$415 billion spent since 1983, the United States has only deployed a limited system of 44 ground-based interceptors with a success rate of about 50 percent.

Additionally, Israel's Iron Dome is designed to intercept short-range rockets and artillery, not long-range intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). Each Iron Dome battery covers approximately 150 square miles, meaning that to protect the entire U.S. landmass of 3.7 million square miles, more than 24,700 batteries would be required, costing an estimated \$2.5 trillion. Even if such a system were deployed, it would be ineffective against ICBMs, which travel at much higher speeds and can employ countermeasures to evade interception.

Iron Dome vs. Drones

The Iron Dome faces serious limitations when it comes to drones. Recent conflicts have highlighted this vulnerability. As reported [by The Wall Street Journal](#), adversaries have increasingly deployed drones to evade or overwhelm defense systems. Describing the challenges faced by Israel's struggle, the outlet wrote,

[The drones] can be small and hard to detect, and they don't move on predictable trajectories or emit the intense heat of rocket engines that make missiles easier to track and destroy. They are also cheap and plentiful, and [are being deployed by the country's adversaries](#) in increasing numbers and sophistication.

These tactics expose the limitations of the Iron Dome's current design and have prompted discussions about the need for enhanced counter-drone measures.

Satellites for Defense?

Rich Lowry, editor-in-chief of [National Review](#), argues that implementing a U.S. Iron Dome would necessitate a more advanced, space-based defense system rather than a literal replication of Israel's model. He highlights the potential of a satellite-driven network, made feasible by advances in space technology, lower launch costs, and enhanced communication capabilities. Citing Elon Musk's success with Starlink, Lowry suggests that the U.S. government could develop a similar system to bolster national security by tracking and intercepting threats from space.

However, there is a risk that such a system could become a network of surveillance satellites covering the United States, raising significant privacy and civil-liberty concerns. While framed as a national security measure, the prospect of a government-controlled, always-on satellite network could grant authorities unprecedented surveillance capabilities.

Donor Influence and Industry Benefits

It is no secret that the development of a U.S. Iron Dome presents a lucrative opportunity for Trump's key donors and stakeholders in the defense industry. As [Politico](#) reported, Trump's appointments of



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billionaire executives to critical Pentagon roles highlight a clear shift in influence. Notable figures such as [Stephen Feinberg](#), [Shyam Sankar](#), and [Trae Stephens](#) will now be positioned to reshape the U.S. defense agenda.

This new wave of Pentagon appointees has earned applause from parts of the tech world. According to Politico, entrepreneur Joe Lonsdale described it as a “revolution” that would “shock the bureaucracy” and speed up the Pentagon’s traditionally sluggish procurement process. Critics have raised concerns about potential conflicts of interest. Many of these appointees have direct financial ties to companies such as Anduril and Palantir. These firms are already under contract with the U.S. military and intelligence agencies. They also stand to profit from future government contracts related to airspace security, drone defense, and advanced weapon systems.

Venture capitalists such as Marc Andreessen and SpaceX’s Elon Musk also have links to Trump’s defense agenda.

As [Forbes](#) wrote after the elections,

With Elon Musk’s potential involvement in a new Trump administration, Silicon Valley’s defense leaders hope the \$800 billion Department of Defense budget will be unlocked for tech startups.

While the vision of unlocking the Pentagon’s coffers for these “emerging innovators” might increase defense-industry efficiency, skeptics might question whether it’s all about improving our defenses or just about shifting the flow of taxpayer dollars from one group of well-connected insiders to another — all while laying the groundwork for an inescapable surveillance network.



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