



Israel Conducts Successful Test of Missile-defense Systems

Israel's defense ministry announced on December 15 that it has successfully completed an unprecedented air-defense exercise during the past month, testing the country's three tiers of missile-defense systems against a variety of aerial threats.

The missile-defense systems were tested against targets fired from sea-borne launchers, imitating various missiles and drones. All of the incoming missiles were intercepted successfully by Israel's multi-tier defense systems — Iron Dome, Arrow, and David's Sling (shown), sometimes simultaneously.



U.S. Missile Defense Agency/Wikimedia Commons

During the recent exercise, David's Sling, in addition to being directed against ballistic missiles, which follow a fixed and predetermined trajectory, was also tested against "the more difficult-to-hit cruise missiles, which effectively function as small, fast, unmanned airplanes, capable of changing direction and thus better able to avoid air defenses," reported the *Times of Israel*.

"The results of the tests will allow the development engineers to continue to improve the capabilities of the [David's Sling] system," the *Times of Israel* quoted the defense ministry.

An AP report noted that Arrow intercepts long-range missiles, David's Sling is designed to shoot down medium-range missiles, and the Iron Dome has been used for years to defend against incoming rocket fire from the Gaza Strip. AP observed that Israel faces a wide range of rocket and missile threats from Palestinian militants in Gaza, from Hezbollah — the Iranian-backed Shiite militant group in neighboring Lebanon — and also from Iran.

Israel's officials have expressed concerns about Iran's development of long-range missiles and Hezbollah's attempts to import or develop missiles capable of striking anywhere in Israel with great precision, reported AP.

During the drill, said the defense ministry, "the various air defense detection systems and batteries were required to communicate with one another and intercept several types of targets, including rockets, unmanned aerial vehicles and — critically — cruise missiles simultaneously."

Fox News quoted Moshe Patel, the director of the Israel Missile Defense Organization (IMDO), who said, "through these tests, we demonstrated that the State of Israel has a robust, multilayered capability to face various threats — cruise missiles, UAVs [Unmanned Aerial Vehicles] and ballistic [missile] threats."

The *Times of Israel* reported that the exercises were conducted by the Rafael defense contractor, which manufactures the Iron Dome and David's Sling systems, along with the Israeli Air Force, under the direction of the IMDO.



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Israel has developed the various missile defenses in conjunction with the United States. The recent drills were conducted with the U.S. Missile Defense Agency (MDA), AP cited Israeli officials as saying,

The New American has reported several times in recent years about U.S.-Israeli cooperation in developing missile-defense systems. One such report, in March 2009, stated that elements of the U.S. military and the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) were deploying a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system at the Nevatim airbase in southern Israel near the city of Beersheba. That report quoted from a then-current press release issued by the United States European Command (EUCOM), which called the deployment “a demonstration of the United States’ continued commitment to Israel’s regional security under the Department of Defense’s Dynamic Force Employment concept.”

Another report by *The New American* a few months later observed that Israel and the United States had completed a series of tests of the Arrow 3 missile-defense system. The tests were conducted in Alaska and were, reportedly, highly successful and showed the system’s ability to carry out “a high altitude hit-to-kill engagement.” That report quoted MDA spokesman Vice-Admiral Jon Hill, who confirmed the successful test: “These successful tests mark a major milestone in the development of the Arrow Weapons System. This unique success in Alaska provides confidence in future Israeli capabilities to defeat the developing threats in the region.”

While it is certainly preferable for the United States to offer indirect assistance to allies such as Israel and Taiwan (such as engaging in joint exercises and selling the allies weapons systems), rather than sending U.S. troops overseas as we did in Afghanistan, one might expect that — in return — the United States would benefit from such exercises by receiving information that would help improve our own defensive capabilities.

In at least one case, however, that did not occur. In 2012, *The New American* reported that the United States had spent millions of dollars on a highly effective missile defense system for another country, yet U.S. troops in the field were still largely at the mercy of enemy rockets. The country in question is Israel, and the missile defense system is Iron Dome.

Despite the fact that the United States supplied \$205 million in funding for Iron Dome in 2011, and has followed up with millions more, “the United States has no rights to the technology involved” in Iron Dome, according to a report from the House Armed Services Committee.

The report stated that Iron Dome was developed and built by Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd., an Israeli government-owned, profit-making company. In August 2012, Rafael joined Raytheon Co. to market the Iron Dome system worldwide. The two are also partners in one of the other anti-missile systems being jointly run by Israel and the Pentagon.

When it comes to Iron Dome, however, Rafael was secretive. House Armed Services Committee spokesman Claude Chafin told *Wired’s* Spencer Ackerman that “the U.S. doesn’t have the necessary transparency into the details of Iron Dome that it has with other U.S.-Israeli anti-missile partnerships.”

The report quoted Walter Pincus of the *Washington Post*, who said,

So here is the United States, having added to its own deficit by spending funds that it must borrow, helping to procure a missile defense system for Israel, which faces the threat but supposedly can’t pay for it alone.

To add insult to injury, Pentagon officials must ask the Israeli government-owned company that is profiting from the weapons sales — including Iron Dome — if the United States can



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have a piece of the action.

There is no guarantee, of course, that Iron Dome would be effective in protecting U.S. troops from insurgents' rockets. But for \$900 million, Washington ought at least to have a chance to find out.

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