

Obama Seeks \$205 Million for Israel Rocket Shield

By [Global Research](#)

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President Barack Obama will ask Congress to provide \$205 million to Israel to spur production and deployment of a new short-range rocket defense system, administration officials said on Thursday.

Produced by Israeli state-owned Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd., Iron Dome uses small radar-guided missiles to blow up Katyusha-style rockets with ranges of between 5 kilometers (3 miles) and 70 kilometer (45 miles), as well as mortar bombs, in mid-air.

Its development was spurred by the 2006 conflict in Lebanon with Hezbollah and the Gaza Strip war against Hamas a year ago. In both cases, Israeli towns within reach of short-range rockets were in some respects defenseless.

"The president recognizes the threat missiles and rockets fired by Hamas and Hezbollah pose to Israelis, and has therefore decided to seek funding from Congress to support the production of Israel's short range rocket defense system called Iron Dome," White House spokesman Tommy Vietor said.

Two Iron Dome batteries are under construction, an Israeli defense official said in February. Designed to be towed by vehicle, they will be available for any Israeli front at a few hours' notice.

Bryan Whitman, Pentagon spokesman, said it was the first direct U.S. investment in the Iron Dome system.

"This funding will expand what they can produce and deploy, and how quickly they're able to do it," he said.

The decision was made to pour funds into the system after U.S. officials observed tests last fall, officials said.

The money comes on top of annual U.S. assistance to Israel.

According to the State Department, U.S. military aid to Israel in 2009 totaled \$2.55 billion. This will increase to \$3 billion in 2012, and will total \$3.15 billion a year from 2013 to 2018.

(Reporting by [Adam Entous](#) and [Caren Bohan](#); Editing by [Xavier Briand](#))

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