

MEMMO

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Attacks from Gaza, Sinai Mark Escalation Against Israel

More than 200 rockets and mortars were launched into Israel in the month of June, a sharp rise over previous months. Attacks against Israelis emanated not only from Hamas-controlled Gaza, but from the increasingly lawless Egyptian Sinai desert. The increase in violence comes in the wake of mounting regional instability and uncertainty, including the election of an Islamist president in Egypt. The United States should continue to work closely with Israel to help it expand its capabilities to defend against these growing threats.

Hamas and other terrorist groups have stepped up rocket and other attacks against Israel during the past month.

- Hamas and other terrorist groups have escalated attacks on Israel, firing more than 200 rockets and mortars during the month of June.
- Two Israelis were killed—one in a June 1 attack along the Gaza border and the other in a June 18 attack launched from Sinai against workers building a security fence along the Egyptian-Israeli border.
- The indiscriminate rocket attacks have struck an Israeli school, a factory and numerous other civilian areas. Only the buildings' armor and sheer luck prevented what may otherwise have been catastrophic casualties.
- The U.S.-designated terrorist group Hamas, which controls Gaza, claimed responsibility for some of the rocket attacks—a rare move in recent years. In previous attacks, other terrorist groups in Gaza have claimed responsibility while Hamas remained quiet so as not to provoke an Israeli response.
- In addition to the threat from Gaza, Israel must contend with the increased dangers from Sinai, which has experienced a marked uptick in lawlessness, an increased presence of global jihadist groups and a dramatic increase in the number and types of sophisticated weaponry.



Israeli police examine the site of a rocket attack near the southern Israeli town of Sderot.

The new attacks come as Israel faces rocket and missile threats from multiple fronts. Millions of Israelis are within range of attack.

- Israel's director of military intelligence, Major General Aviv Kochavi, recently estimated that 200,000 rockets and missiles are aimed at the Jewish state from Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and Iran.
- Israel has been hit with more than 8,000 indiscriminate rocket and mortar attacks since it withdrew from Gaza in 2005. Hizballah also launched 4,000 rockets at Israeli civilians during the Second Lebanon War in 2006.
- Earlier this year, terrorists in Gaza fired more than 300 rockets at Israel during one week in March. In early April, a rocket fired from Sinai hit the resort town of Eilat.

- Weapons smuggling by Hamas and other terrorist groups have has increased as a result of instability in the region and the availability of thousands of missiles from Libya.
- Hamas' arsenal includes advanced Iranian made Fajr-3, Katyusha and Grad rockets, anti-tank missiles, and heavy mortar rounds. In March, a missile fired by Hamas landed in a suburb of Tel Aviv, illustrating how the group's weapons can penetrate deeply into Israel.
- Iran also continues to advance its missiles capable of hitting Israel and U.S. troops in the region. On July 3, Iran said it successfully tested a series of Shihab missiles, which experts say could be used to carry a nuclear warhead.

The United States and Israel have worked closely together to counter the increasing threat of rockets and missiles.

- Israel, working closely with the United States, has developed a multi-tiered missile defense shield that is capable of protecting its citizens from Katyusha-style rockets, medium- and long-range rockets and ballistic missiles.
- Israel developed and, with support from the United States, is producing the Iron Dome rocket defense system to counter Katyusha rocket attacks. The Iron Dome, which uses small radar-guided missiles to intercept incoming rockets, has proven to be over 80 percent effective.
- After a successful track record of intercepting short-range rockets fired from Gaza, the United States is now exploring the feasibility of deploying Iron Dome technology to protect U.S. troops.
- Jointly developed by the United States and Israel, the Arrow 3 will intercept longer-range ballistic missiles. Among the world's most sophisticated missile shields, the currently deployed Arrow 2 is the only operational system that has consistently proven that one missile can shoot down another at high altitudes and supersonic speeds.
- Israel and the United States are also collaborating on the development of a quick-reaction defense system, known as David's Sling, to address the threats posed by short and medium-range missiles.

The United States must continue its support for Israel's right to self-defense and its quest for peace.

- Congress has recognized Israel's unique role as a strategic partner, as well as the common threats faced by America and Israel. Congress' continued support for Arrow, Iron Dome and David's Sling is vital for the success of these programs.
- Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta announced on May 17 that the Obama administration will seek to provide an additional \$70 million toward the Iron Dome rocket defense system in the current fiscal year. This proposed aid would be part of a commitment for future funding of the Iron Dome that key congressional committees are currently considering.
- More generally, Congress has taken a leading role in fostering broad U.S.-Israel strategic cooperation. The House and Senate have passed the U.S.-Israel Enhanced Security Cooperation Act of 2012, which reaffirms that the U.S. commitment to Israel's security is unshakeable and that America is committed to providing Israel the means to defend itself by itself.
- In addition to the Iron Dome funding request, Congress this year is set to make significant contributions to U.S.-Israel cooperative programs funded within the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2013 and the Defense Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2013.
- Enhancing joint exercises is another important way for the two allies to strengthen cooperation. America and Israel are scheduled to hold their largest ever joint exercise this fall as a way to test both country's rocket and missile defense systems against a simulated missile attack against Israel.