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THE AMERICAN ISRAEL PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
America's Pro-Israel Lobby

MEMO

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David's Sling Addresses Growing Missile Threats

Amid unprecedented Mideast chaos and instability, Israel and the United States are working together to address the threat of expanded and more sophisticated rocket and missile arsenals. The David's Sling missile defense system represents the latest joint U.S.-Israel effort to counter missiles launched by Iran, Syria, Hamas and Hezbollah. The United States and Israel should continue to fund joint development of the system, which will be incorporated into Israel's broader defense strategy.

The David's Sling missile defense system will help defend millions of Israelis from rocket and missile threats from multiple fronts.

- David's Sling – a short to medium-range ballistic missile defense system – will be incorporated into Israel's broader defense strategy, which includes deterrence, counter-attack, active missile defense, and civil defense measures.
- David's Sling is designed to provide the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and the U.S. military with effective and affordable protection against long-range artillery rockets, short to medium-range ballistic missiles, aircraft and low-flying cruise missiles. The system will close the current operational coverage gap between Israel's short-range Iron Dome and higher-altitude Arrow ballistic missile interceptor.

Israel and the United States recently conducted a successful test of the David's Sling system.

- The U.S. has provided $850 million in research and development funding for David's Sling since 2006 and signed a project agreement with Israel to co-develop the system in 2008.
- As Israel's enemies develop more sophisticated and longer-range missiles, U.S.-Israel missile defense cooperation reinforces the unshakable bonds between these two allies.
- On April 1, David's Sling passed a series of advanced tests, conducted jointly by the U.S. Missile Defense Agency and the Israeli Ministry of Defense. During the tests, the system successfully intercepted its target, putting it on track for deployment in early 2016.

The security situation on Israel's northern border continues to deteriorate, increasing the importance of the David's Sling system.

- With the support of Iran and Syria, Hezbollah has amassed an arsenal of more than 100,000 missiles and rockets, threatening all major Israeli population centers.
- Should the Hezbollah terrorist organization in Lebanon attack the Jewish state, the David's Sling system will be critical in protecting Israeli citizens and property.

- During the 2006 Second Lebanon War, Hezbollah fired more than 4,000 rockets and missiles at Israel over a five week period. The IDF is currently preparing for the possibility that Hezbollah will fire between 1,000 to 1,500 rockets per day at Israel if conflict again breaks out.
- In 2010, former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said that Hezbollah has "more missiles than most governments in the world."
- Iran and Syria routinely transfer sophisticated weapons to Hezbollah, including hundreds of M-600 Syrian guided rockets. With a range of 185 miles and accuracy measured in feet, these rockets represent a significant strategic improvement of Hezbollah's capabilities.

The United States must continue working with Israel to ensure its qualitative military edge and ability to defend against growing threats.

- Through the annual defense appropriations bill, the U.S. provides funding to jointly developed missile defense programs with Israel. These funds help Israel defend against rockets and missile threats posed by hostile adversaries.
- The U.S. should continue to provide funding for the David's Sling anti-missile system. To ensure on-time deployment of this program, $286 million is needed in fiscal year 2016.
- Congress should continue vital funding for other U.S.-Israel missile and rocket defense programs, including Iron Dome, Arrow Improvement System Program, and Arrow-3. The rapid development and deployment of Israel's multi-tiered rocket and missile defense system will continue to play an important role in mitigating Israel's growing missile threats and serve as an important demonstration of technology that can help protect U.S. forces.