

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 17, 2020

The Honorable Dr. Mark Esper
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Esper:

We write to you to request a deployment plan for the first two batteries of Iron Dome. The recent attacks on U.S. facilities in Iraq have increased longstanding concerns about our air defense capabilities. Injuries to American and coalition servicemembers and civilians, as well as damage to our infrastructure from rocket attacks, prove that existing gaps within our air defense must be addressed in the very near term. A series of rocket attacks on U.S. and coalition forces in just the last month indicate that state-supported militias can increasingly overcome or avoid current U.S. air defense systems. If we do not address this threat now, we fear the consequences will be even more severe.

As you know, Congress raised this issue in both the FY2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and the Department of Defense Appropriations Act by directing the U.S. Army to deploy four batteries – two in 2020 and two in 2023 – of a medium-range air defense system to counter cruise missiles and other threats. In response, the Army issued a report selecting Iron Dome because it provided “the best value to the Army based on its schedule, cost per kill, magazine depth, and capability against specified threats.” While the FY2019 NDAA allowed a waiver for fielding this capability due to budget concerns, the Army declined to use the waiver. Instead, they astutely asked for a reprogramming to support the purchase of the two initial Iron Dome batteries. Congress approved that reprogramming request last year.

It is our understanding that the Army signed a contract for Iron Dome with the Government of Israel, and the Iron Dome system continues to prove itself against salvos and more advanced threats. It is also our understanding that Iron Dome has proven its ability to rapidly integrate with U.S. systems given the recent successful Marine Corps test. This establishes confidence in a viable path forward with Iron Dome. We cannot wait for additional batteries or new and unproven capabilities; we do not have the luxury of time.

To that end, we respectfully request:

- A deployment plan for the first two batteries of Iron Dome, including whether the Army can accelerate its fielding;
- An update on any work done since October 2018 to ensure the integration of the Iron Dome system into other Army systems; and
- Ideas for how this integration can more rapidly meet current threats and/or provide additional interim capability.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,



Grace Meng
Member of Congress

/s/ Jim Costa
Member of Congress

/s/ Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/ Michael Waltz
Member of Congress

/s/ Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

/s/ William R. Timmons, IV
Member of Congress

/s/ Max Rose
Member of Congress

/s/ Ted S. Yoho
Member of Congress

/s/ Elaine G. Luria
Member of Congress

/s/ Chuck Fleischmann
Member of Congress

/s/ John Katko
Member of Congress

/s/ Jim Banks
Member of Congress



Joe Wilson
Member of Congress

/s/ Randy K. Weber
Member of Congress

/s/ Andy Kim
Member of Congress

/s/ Peter T. King
Member of Congress

/s/ Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress

/s/ Kathleen M. Rice
Member of Congress

/s/ W. Gregory Steube
Member of Congress

/s/ Vicky Hartzler
Member of Congress

/s/ Steve Stivers
Member of Congress

/s/ Don Bacon
Member of Congress

/s/ Bradley Byrne
Member of Congress