

U.S. Senators Seek Transfer Of Iron Domes To Ukraine

Apurva Mahajan June 29, 2023



Credit: U.S. Army

Two U.S. senators are pushing for the transfer of two U.S. Iron Dome defense system batteries to Ukraine.

On June 23, Sens. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) and Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) wrote a letter to Senate [Armed Services Committee](#) Chairman Jack Reed (D-R.I.) and Ranking Member Sen. Roger Wicker (D-Miss.) asking the committee to enable the equipment transfer.

Iron Dome is a short-range air defense system that was first used to intercept incoming rockets launched from Gaza into Israel. It gained renown by notching a reported 90% or greater success rate after becoming operational in 2011.

In October 2022, the Ukrainian government sent Israel an official request to provide it with air defense systems including Iron Dome to counter Russian missiles and drones of Iranian origin. But Israel has not provided Ukraine with weapons since the war started.

“We maintain a policy of supporting Ukraine via humanitarian aid. However, for operational and regional consideration, I don’t see us sending offensive military equipment,” Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz told European Union ambassadors later that same month.

Co-production of Iron Dome is a joint venture between Israel-based Rafael Advanced Defense Systems and RTX, formerly known as Raytheon Technologies. Although the U.S. Army owns two Iron Dome batteries, Israel would still have to approve the sale to a third-party country.

The first Army Iron Dome battery has completed new-equipment training and is ready for deployment, according to Gen. Daniel Karbler, commanding general of U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command.

“The other one is wrapping up its new-equipment training right now. So the Army does have one [Iron Dome battery] available for deployment pending a request,” Karbler told the Senate Armed Services strategic forces subcommittee May 9.

Though Israel has blocked the transfer to date, Ukraine needs additional air defense support, Van Hollen and Graham argue. If Israel does not budge, the senators suggested the possibility of moving the U.S. Iron Dome batteries to a different U.S. ally under U.S. supervision so air defense systems owned by the third country could be freed for Ukraine.

“We can save more Ukrainian lives today if we transfer those batteries,” the senators wrote.

Van Hollen and Graham cited Ukraine’s reaffirmation of its need for air defense support along with the destruction of the dam in the Ukrainian Kherson region and the Russian barrage on an apartment building in Kryvyi Rih, both earlier this month, as reasons to supply the country with the Iron Dome system.

