



On June 12, 2014, *klal Yisrael* was shocked and outraged to hear of the kidnapping of three Israeli teenagers who had been on their way home from yeshiva. As communities around the world joined together to daven for them, Israel embarked on a massive search operation, combing Hamas enclaves and questioning hundreds of suspects in the ensuing weeks. Tensions escalated dramatically, finally culminating in rocket attacks from terrorist groups in Hamas-controlled Gaza targeting densely populated areas in Eretz Yisrael.

Just four years ago, Israeli civilians were essentially defenseless in the face of these rocket attacks, which are classified as war crimes. Sirens, bomb shelters and sheer terror were the way of life in many towns and cities within their range. However, since then something changed: the Iron Dome.

To gain insight into this major technological breakthrough and how it came to be, *Zman* interviewed representatives from Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, the Israeli company that invented the Iron Dome.

- Yitzchok Wagschal
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Israel's Virtual Walls:

The Iron Dome

Zman Gets an Inside Look at the Makings of the Defense System that Protects Jewish Lives



I was sitting in the lobby of the Grand Court Hotel on St. George Street, taking refuge from the hot summer sun of Jerusalem. It was July 8, 2014, and I was meeting with Hebrew *Zman's* editor-in-chief, Yair Weinstock, to discuss some upcoming articles.

A man dashed by at top speed. Strange behavior for a hotel lobby.

Then I heard the screams and shouting. Turning around, I saw what looked like a hundred people running through the lobby, seemingly for their lives. In a split second, I recalled that I was just one street away from the East Jerusalem Arab neighborhood of Bab a-Zahara. With increasing trepidation, I expected to see an armed terrorist round the corner at any second. Rising from my seat, I thought it prudent to follow the crowd to shelter.

Soon, though, it became clear that there were no armed Arabs charging through the hotel. Rather, a Hamas rocket launched from Gaza had been detected on its way to Jerusalem. Unaccustomed to rocket warning sirens, I did not discern the sound over the clamor of people rushing for cover.

Like many people, I thought that Gaza rockets had a fairly limited range, and weren't able to reach Jerusalem. Now I learned otherwise.

Indeed, that same night Hamas leaders took credit for the attack on Jerusalem, boasting of their new M75 rockets with at least a 45-mile range.

Rocket Attacks Begin to Plague the Holy Land

On January 30, 2001, a Jewish family was gathered on the ground floor of its new home. They lived in Netzarim, a sunny seaside Jewish community situated within the borders of the Gaza Strip (part of *Eretz Yisrael*), along the northern coast. Netzarim was in a zone that was geographically separated from the Gush Katif bloc—a Jewish stronghold in Gaza—and surrounded only by hostile Arabs.

Nonetheless, the residents were industrious, building homes, businesses and



Israeli citizens take cover as a siren sounds warning of an incoming missile.

a beautiful *shul*. They were content with their lives there, willing to forego a “more secure” existence elsewhere in *Eretz Yisrael*. Besides the *shul*, Netzarim boasted its own schools, *kollel* and *yeshiva*, as well as successful fruit, vegetable and *esrog* plantations. (Unfortunately, the residents of all the Jewish settlements within Gaza were forcibly evacuated during the unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005.)

That day, the family members were going about their business when all of a sudden their house shook, as if rattled by a violent earthquake, followed by a deafening explosion. The family dashed out of the house, physically uninjured but quivering with fear. When they looked at their house, they saw a gaping hole in their roof. Despite extensive damage from the explosion, a cement ceiling had blocked the mortar from proceeding further into the house. Thankfully, no one had been on the upper floor at the time.

It was just a few months into the Second Intifada. This incident marked the first time that Arab-Palestinians had

targeted a residential Jewish area with a projectile weapon. Israelis were furious. The IDF reported that this was a new trend in the Arab terror war and “a clear escalation” in tactics. They found that the weapon used was of Soviet design, an 82-mm mortar that had been smuggled in through Egypt. Later it was learned that, around the same time, terrorists in Gaza had begun constructing their own low-quality, homemade rockets to launch at Jewish civilians.

Since 2001, tens of thousands of rockets have struck the Jewish state. Except for the shelling during the war with Hezbollah, the vast majority of the rockets have emanated from the Gaza Strip, terrorizing the entire south of *Eretz Yisrael*. Month by month, and often daily, Hamas launched rockets from within the small territory it controls. Some 90% of the residents of the city of Sderot, on the border with Gaza, have had a rocket land either on their street or an adjoining one. Many suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.

In the beginning, Hamas only had makeshift, inaccurate rockets. They had a very short range and wobbled in flight. As time passed, and with cash and materiel flowing in from the Islamic Republic of Iran, Saudi



Hamas terrorists transport rockets to a launch site.



Preparing to launch rockets at Israeli civilian population centers.



One out of thousands of Gaza rockets aimed at Israel.