

U.S. approves replenishment of Israel's Iron Dome after Gaza defeat

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In this file picture, an Israeli missile launched from the Iron Dome missile system, designed to intercept and destroy incoming short-range rockets and artillery shells. (Photo: AFP)

Washington, June 20 (RHC)-- The United States has vowed to reinforce Israel's so-called Iron Dome after Tel Aviv suffered a defeat in its 11-day war on the Gaza Strip, with the regime's much-publicized missile system failing in the face of a massive rocket fire by Palestinian resistance movements.

Earlier this month, Israeli minister of military affairs Benny Gantz visited the United States, where he met with Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin. During the meeting, Gantz reportedly asked Washington for \$1 billion in additional emergency military aid, arguing that the money was needed to replenish the Iron Dome battery and purchase munitions for the Israeli air force.

At Thursday's congressional session, addressing the Senate Appropriations Committee, Austin said that Israel's request for military assistance had been approved by the Pentagon for its 2022 budget.

The U.S. will reportedly look to transfer the total requested amount over to Israel following approval from Congress, he added, noting that the U.S. government is working on clarifying the details and that politicians should expect a special budget request within the coming days.

U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley also confirmed at the same Senate hearing that the administration of President Joe Biden will call on Congress to pass the budget to replenish the Iron Dome system.

Tel Aviv launched the bombing campaign against Gaza on May 10, after Palestinian retaliation against violent raids on worshippers at the al-Aqsa Mosque and the regime's plans to force a number of Palestinian families out of their homes at Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem al-Quds.

The Gaza-based resistance groups did not sit idly by and fired 4,300 rockets towards different cities in the occupied lands during the war, which ended on May 21 after Israel announced a unilateral ceasefire that the resistance movements accepted with Egyptian mediation.

Hamas says it has targeted a key Israeli air base as well as two of regime's Iron Dome stations. The Gaza fighters struck the Red Sea port of Eilat, over 190 kilometres away using a new Ayyash-250 rocket.

Israeli media said 13 people were killed in the panic-stricken occupied territories and 357 others were injured.

Gaza's Health Ministry said 260 Palestinians lost their lives in the Israeli offensive, including 66 children and 39 women, and 1948 others were wounded.

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