

# Iron Dome Deployment to U.A.E. Showed Abraham Accords Defense Potential

Ari Cicurel

*Associate Director of Foreign Policy*

## I. Introduction

Israel's reported [deployment](#) of an Iron Dome battery and IDF operators to the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) during Operations Epic Fury and Roaring Lion showed how the Abraham Accords and Israeli defense technologies can deliver concrete benefits to regional security. The unprecedented deployment helped the U.A.E. absorb heavy Iranian missile and drone attacks and added a proven lower-tier defense layer alongside U.S. and Emirati air defenses. It also marked important progress in Arab-Israeli defense cooperation from primarily intelligence sharing, early warning, and occasional cross-border intercepts to ward the physical deployment of Israeli defensive assets beyond Israel's territory.

Israel's willingness to send scarce air defense capacity abroad while Iran and Hezbollah were also attacking it underscored the value Jerusalem places on helping protect regional partners against shared threats. For Washington, the episode provides a clear case for building on U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM)-led integrated air and missile defense (IAMD) progress, expanding and deepening the Abraham Accords to include partners like Saudi Arabia, and increasing U.S. production capacity for Israeli interceptors that can help defend Israel, U.S. forces, and regional partners against Iran's drones and missiles.

## II. Iran's Attacks Stretched Gulf Defenses

Since the start of the war, Iran has launched 5,190 drones, 2,186 ballistic missiles, and 59 cruise missiles, according to [JINSA data](#), which have stressed U.S. and partner nation defenses. Iran's proximity to Arab Gulf nations compressed warning and engagement timelines for U.S. and Emirati defenders. Iranian short-range ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones can reach targets quickly, giving defenders less time to detect, classify, assign, and engage incoming threats. Iran could exploit those short timelines by firing from multiple locations, combining different projectile types, and targeting fixed radars, airbases, cities, ports, and energy infrastructure.

In particular, Iran [launched](#) 38 percent of the total projectiles it has fired during the war against the U.A.E.—more than any other country—including 2,256 drones, 537 ballistic missiles, and 26 cruise missiles. While, the U.A.E. fields two Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) batteries and nine Patriot batteries capable of intercepting ballistic missiles, with Patriot also able to engage cruise missiles and some drones, Iran's heavy use of drones [exposed a gap](#) in the U.A.E.'s lower-tier defenses against high-volume, low-cost aerial threats.

Shahed drones can launch from simple rails on pickup trucks, allowing crews to disperse, conceal, fire, and relocate more easily than ballistic missile crews. Newer Iranian drone tactics further complicated defense, including fiber-optic guided drones immune to electronic warfare jamming, first-person-view drones for point targets, drones flying below counter-UAS radar detection floors, and faster jet-powered variants that compressed interception timelines.

### III. Iron Dome Strengthened Emirati Defenses

Iron Dome provided the U.A.E. with a combat-proven lower-tier layer air defense capable of addressing the particular drone and missile challenges that Iranian attacks posed to nearby Gulf nations. Israel has used the Iron Dome's Tamir interceptors to neutralize thousands of projectiles up to 70 kilometers away. Israel has also [evolved](#) the Iron Dome beyond its original role against rockets and mortars so that it can now also neutralize drones, cruise missiles, and some smaller payload ballistic missiles. Its deployment to the U.A.E. further demonstrated how Iron Dome can operate as part of a multi-tiered air defense architecture alongside U.S. systems, like THAAD and Patriot, adding a lower layer that helps cover threats below higher-end missile defenses.

The deployment clarified why the Abraham Accords are crucial for regional security. The Abraham Accords and Israel's 2021 move into CENTCOM's [area of responsibility](#) (AOR)—a shift that JINSA had been at the forefront of recommending since [2018](#)—created the [foundation](#) for closer IAMD cooperation, including for those that did not yet have formal ties with Israel. While Iran and its proxies have tried to punish normalization, with the [October 7, 2023 attack](#) as part of Tehran's broader effort to disrupt Arab-Israeli normalization and deter Gulf states from closer ties with Israel, repeated examples of regional air defense cooperation demonstrate that the Abraham Accords have remained resilient, even been strengthened, in the face of the Iranian threat. Arab states, like Jordan and Saudi Arabia have, on a limited basis, used their own assets to help Israel defeat drones that crossed their national borders during Iranian attacks in [2024](#) and [2025](#). Now, Israel's deployment of a key air defense asset to the U.A.E. shows that normalization can produce concrete wartime security benefits for its Arab partners.

While Israel has previously sent military forces to support the [security](#) of its regional partners, Israeli officials accepted both an operational and domestic political risk by sending scarce defensive capacity to an Arab partner while Iran and Hezbollah were also attacking Israel. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar indicated that Hezbollah has [launched](#) over 10,000 missiles, rockets and drones at Israel since the war began, and JINSA data has [tracked](#) over 560 Iranian ballistic missiles targeting Israel. Even amid those threats, Israel's decision to share some of its limited air defenses underscored the value it places on helping protect regional partners.

Similarly, despite the Abraham Accords and Israel's previous reported [transfer](#) of Barak and SPYDER air defense systems to the U.A.E., publicly relying on Israel for air defense would also carry political sensitivities for Abu Dhabi. The U.A.E. has deepened security cooperation with Israel, but visible dependence on Israeli military personnel and systems could generate domestic and regional criticism, especially amid continuing Arab public opposition to Israel's conduct in Gaza.

Yet, Israel's decision to deploy Iron Dome signaled a major shift toward physically deploying Israeli defensive assets beyond Israel's territory to defend another nation under fire. Previous cooperation often centered on intelligence sharing, early warning, and occasional intercepts when Iranian drones or missiles crossed regional airspace. Iron Dome's deployment moved beyond that model by showing that Israeli air defense assets can directly reinforce a Gulf partner under attack, giving Arab states a clearer incentive to expand operational ties with Israel. While the extent of Iron Dome's data connectivity to Emirati or other regional air defenses remains unclear, its use in the Gulf demonstrated that Israeli capabilities could operate within a multinational defense architecture and underscored the potential for the United States to help further integration.

## IV. Recommendations

The United States should build on existing CENTCOM-led IAMD progress by turning ad hoc cooperation developed in crisis into standing formal integration so that all of America's regional partners can share early-warning radar coverage and air defense platforms to track threats across the entire battlespace and coordinate defenses beyond their own territory. The United States should work with Israel and Arab partners to optimize the regional placement of air defense systems, sensors, and interceptors so they can help one another protect the most vulnerable bases, ports, energy infrastructure, population centers, and flight corridors against Iranian missiles and drones.

The United States should also use Israel's Iron Dome deployment to the U.A.E. as leverage for expanding and deepening the Abraham Accords. Washington should make the case to Saudi Arabia and other regional partners that normalization is not only a diplomatic or economic project, but also a practical security framework that can help them defend against Iran. Building toward normalization now would allow Israel and Arab partners to develop visible, routine cooperation, including not only IAMD but also maritime defense, cyber security, counterterrorism, intelligence sharing, and contingency planning for attacks on regional infrastructure.

Congress should also expand and prioritize U.S. production capacity for Tamir and other Israeli interceptors to support Israel's wartime requirements, protect U.S. forces, and ensure that Israeli systems have enough interceptor depth to reinforce partners. Greater [production capacity](#) would further help Israel take on a larger share of the regional security burden, improve the resilience of partner air defenses during sustained attacks, and strengthen deterrence by signaling that the United States and Israel can rapidly replenish critical defensive munitions. The United States should also acquire Iron Dome, which it already [co-produces](#) with Israel, for the [Golden Dome](#) initiative to substantially expand U.S. homeland defense because the system has proven effective against drones and costs far less than many U.S. air defenses.