

DEFENDING ISRAEL AGAINST MISSILE ATTACK

(Updating *Backgrounder* 726, "Meeting the Threat of Ballistic Missiles in the Third World," September 20, 1989.)

The United States and Israel have been working together since 1988 to develop an anti-missile defense system, called *Arrow*. This could protect Israel from ballistic missile attack. Israel's defense requires that *Arrow* be deployed. The Iraqi *Scud* missile attacks on Israel during the Persian Gulf war demonstrated how vulnerable Israel is to a reign of terror from the skies. For *Arrow* to function properly, it must be linked up with U.S. surveillance satellites. The reason: the *Arrow* missile needs satellite early warning of enemy missile strikes before it can launch its own counter-attack. The problem for Israel is, linking *Arrow* to U.S. satellites could violate the 1972 U.S.-Soviet Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, which prohibits the U.S. from transferring ABM systems or components to other nations. The ABM Treaty thus has become a major obstacle to defending Israel. Israel's supporters now must recognize that Israel's security is weakened if the ABM Treaty is allowed to diminish the capabilities of the *Arrow* system.

The ABM Treaty sharply limits U.S. development and deployment of defenses against "strategic" missiles, which are informally defined as missiles with ranges of more than 3,400 miles. The treaty does not limit defenses against "tactical" missiles, which are missiles with ranges shorter than 3,400 miles.¹ Article IX of the ABM Treaty, however, prohibits the U.S. from transferring missile interceptors, sensors, and other ABM systems to other nations.

But protection of Israel from missile attack requires such U.S. help. Israel already faces Saudi Arabia's 1,360-mile range, Chinese-built CSS-2. Yet if *Arrow* has the ability to shoot down the CSS-2, it also will be able to shoot down the Soviet SS-N-6. Because of this, the *Arrow* could be defined as a system restricted by the ABM Treaty. If so, supporters of a strong defense for Israel may have to choose between keeping the ABM Treaty or defending Israel against missile attacks.

Pressing Need. Protecting itself from missile attack is a pressing problem for Israel. As Americans saw on television during the Persian Gulf war, Israel suffered repeated unprovoked *Scud* missile attacks from Iraq. Israeli citizens were forced to don gas masks and confine themselves to "sealed rooms," fearing these *Scud* missiles could be armed with chemical warheads. Despite the success of the *Patriot* sys-

¹ Traditionally, missiles and bombers have been defined as strategic if they could be used by the U.S. to threaten the territory of the Soviet Union and vice versa, not by range alone. Thus, the range-based definition given for strategic and tactical systems must be considered an informal one.

tem in intercepting many of the *Scuds*, thousands of homes and businesses were damaged, hundreds of Israelis were injured, and four citizens were killed.

While the United Nations is requiring that Iraq dismantle all missiles capable of threatening Israel, there is no certainty that Iraq will do so. More important, other countries, still in a state of war with Israel, already have missiles like the *Scud*, and are working to improve their arsenals. Iran used ballistic missiles extensively in its 1980-1988 war against Iraq, especially during the 1988 "War of the Cities," where they targeted Baghdad. While Iran's longest-range missile, the 185-mile *Scud*, cannot reach Israel, longer-range missiles could be deployed by Iran if reports are correct that Iran has been collaborating with the People's Republic of China and North Korea to obtain longer range missiles.

Other Middle East countries also may be trying to obtain missiles capable of striking at Israel. Saudi Arabia possesses the longest-range missile of any Arab country, the CSS-2 missile built by mainland China. All of Israel is well within range of this system from where it is deployed near Riyadh. Syria's missile arsenal poses the most immediate threat to Israel. The Syrians possess Soviet-supplied missiles of varying ranges, including the FROG-7 (43 miles), the SS-21 (75 miles), and the *Scud* (185 miles). The Syrians are reported to have struck a deal with mainland China to buy M-11 missiles, which have a range of 300 miles. All these missiles can hit Israel from Syria and can be armed with chemical warheads.

A Missile Defense for Israel. Israel and the U.S. have been working together on the *Arrow* ballistic missile defense program since 1988. The \$158 million in initial funding for *Arrow* has been split between the two countries, with America paying 80 percent of the costs and Israel 20 percent. The system has had two flight tests, one last August 9, and the other this March 25. Both tests were in Israel. Two additional flight tests are scheduled for later this year. The agreement signed in 1988 establishing the *Arrow* program was due to expire after this round of four tests. On June 7, the U.S. and Israel signed a new agreement continuing the program. The new agreement commits \$270 million to the continuation of the *Arrow* program and the establishment of a follow-on program to *Arrow*, of which the U.S. will pay 72 percent.

The *Arrow* system will be a ground-based interceptor missile capable of protecting large areas of Israeli territory. It will have a conventional explosive warhead designed to throw a barrier of debris in the path of an incoming missile. It will have the range and accuracy to protect Israel against missiles armed with chemical warheads. The new agreement also funds what are called the *Arrow* Continuation Experiments (ACEs), which will lead either to the development of a new missile or to a modified version of the existing *Arrow* missile, which in either case will be smaller, mobile, and more sophisticated.

Congress should applaud the signing of the new agreement with Israel to continue the *Arrow* program. It will serve both U.S. and Israeli interests by providing a defense against ballistic missiles, which if left uncountered could destabilize the Middle East. But Congress can bolster the effort to develop this system by establishing a legislative mandate for achieving certain goals for the program. These goals can be established through legislation governing the SDI program. The ABM Treaty should not be allowed to prevent fulfilling the goals that help Israel defend itself. These goals should be:

◆ ◆ **Give Israel the capability to defend itself against all the types of missiles deployed in the Middle East, including the intermediate-range CSS-2.** For Israel to be defended, the U.S. should help Israel attain a capability to defend itself against all types of missiles currently arrayed against it. These include the intermediate-range CSS-2 deployed by Saudi Arabia, and similar intermediate-range missiles likely to be fielded by Iran and Syria in the future. It is dangerous to insist that Israel should be defended only against shorter-range missiles. The *Arrow* could end up being obsolete by the time it is

deployed in 1996 if Iran and Syria join Saudi Arabia in acquiring an arsenal of intermediate-range missiles.

◆ ◆ **Deploy Arrow no later than 1996.** Current plans call for making the *Arrow* system operational by 1996. Energetic efforts should be made to adhere to the existing development and deployment schedule for *Arrow*. The ballistic missile threat to Israel already exists. Every day that Israel remains less than fully defended against such missiles is another day America faces an unstable military balance in the volatile Middle East. In the future, *Arrow* will may provide the means to limit a Middle East conflict much in the same way *Patriot* served to prevent a wider conflict during the Persian Gulf war. Time is of the essence in restoring the balance of forces in the Middle East.

◆ ◆ **Support Arrow through U.S. satellite systems.** A key lesson learned from the Persian Gulf war is that the *Patriot* can become a more effective anti-missile system if it is supported by satellite sensor systems. Satellites give early warning of attack by detecting missile launches and approximating the impact points of missile warheads. There is little doubt that the *Arrow* system will be more effective if it can be given similar support from U.S. satellite systems. Congress should instruct the Pentagon to reach an agreement with Israel to ensure such support for *Arrow*.



There is no firm agreement among experts that helping Israel in this way might violate the ABM Treaty. Yet if it is decided that it might, the two-decades old accord should not be allowed to keep Israel naked to missile attack. The fact of missile proliferation was unanticipated by the ABM Treaty at the time of its signing. As such, the treaty has the unintended consequence of leaving the U.S., its allies, and forces in field vulnerable to missile strikes from third countries. The ABM Treaty itself allows either party to withdraw if circumstances arise such that continued adherence to the treaty's terms will jeopardize their supreme interests. Just such a circumstance has arisen by the proliferation of ballistic missiles in the Third World. If need be, the U.S. should withdraw from the ABM Treaty to give Israel adequate protection against missile strikes.

Indispensable Role. The Bush Administration deserves great credit for reaching the recent agreement with Israel to extend the *Arrow* program. The Bush team understands that defenses against ballistic missiles will play an indispensable role in maintaining peace and stability in the Middle East. Congress can build on Bush's achievement by providing a clear legislative mandate for U.S. participation in the *Arrow* program. This mandate should not be jeopardized by a misguided application of the ABM Treaty, which could leave Israel exposed to dangerous missile attacks from intermediate-range missiles.

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