

Iron Dome is not enough

The time has come to stop being afraid and demand that the Skyguard laser system and the Vulcan Phalanx artillery system be flown to Israel immediately and positioned alongside the communities in southern Israel.

By [Reuven Pedatzur](#) | Nov.13, 2012 | 6:18 AM | 4



Mayors of the south, Alon Shuster, Haim Yellin, Shmuel Rifman and David Buskila, the time has come for you to stop being afraid of the defense establishment's reaction and demand openly and resolutely that the Skyguard laser system and the Vulcan Phalanx artillery system be flown to Israel immediately and positioned alongside the communities you lead.

You have nothing to lose. After all, the Israel Defense Forces isn't managing to stop the hail of rockets and missiles with its existing resources, and these missiles are turning the lives of your residents into a living hell. Now that you have discovered what was already well known, but had long been hidden from you - that the Iron Dome system can't protect communities near the Gaza border - you would be violating your trust as leaders of the area if you didn't face off bravely against the Defense Ministry, the very ministry whose senior officials promised you that Iron Dome would protect you.

Your behavior over the last few years has been bewildering. You're aware of the existence of Skyguard, a laser-based defense system capable of shooting down the rockets falling on your heads; you also know that Vulcan Phalanx protected the U.S. Army forces in Iraq against rockets and mortars with great success. Yet despite this, you're afraid to ask the government to even consider the possibility of buying these two defensive systems.

It's true that some in the Defense Ministry would be angry with you for raising the possibility of buying the laser system and the rapid-fire artillery, because that might harm the reputations of those who decided to develop Iron Dome instead and refused even to hear of any other alternative. But it's hard to accept your willingness to ignore a reasonable option for protecting your communities just to avoid upsetting the defense establishment.

It's your responsibility to look after your residents, not the reputations of those who, according to the state comptroller, promised that Iron Dome would also provide a solution for the defense of Sderot, but didn't keep their promise. The fear you express in off-the-record conversations - that if you anger the heads of the defense establishment, they'll halt funding for reinforcing buildings in your communities against rockets - is ridiculous.

Shuster, Yellin, Rifman and Buskila (and all the other leaders of Gaza-area communities), you know the Defense Ministry has an official letter dating back to January 2007 in which Northrop Grumman promised to begin providing Skyguard systems as of July 2008. You also know that the American company never even received a response from the ministry, and you know why.

More than four years have passed since then, yet you've continued your silence and failed to demand an explanation for the rejection of the American offer to supply these defensive systems. Even after you learned that the defense establishment hadn't kept its promises, for some reason you continued to trust it.

Over the last decade, many billions of shekels have been invested in various plans to cope with the Qassam rocket problem via military campaigns, new technologies and fortification. But eight Skyguard systems, which would cost about \$500 million, could provide your communities with real protection. And the cost of Vulcan Phalanx, which provides excellent localized protection, is downright negligible.

After more than a decade in which you supported the defense establishment and voiced confidence in it even though it disappointed you, it's your obligation to raise an outcry and demand that the prime minister and defense minister order the defense establishment to purchase these readily available systems. These systems could defend the lives of the residents who have elected you to lead them.