

United States Senate

June 23, 2023

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Reed and Ranking Member Wicker:

As Ukraine continues its brave fight against Russia's unprovoked invasion, we write regarding the urgent need to support Ukraine's air defense and help defend its territorial integrity. Ukraine has repeatedly emphasized its need for enhanced air defense capabilities to protect its citizens and its territory. While the United States has transferred equipment and munitions for Patriot and HAWK air-defense systems, there is more we can and should provide.

On May 9, U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Commanding General LTG Daniel Karbler told the Senate Armed Services Committee that the United States has "two Iron Dome batteries right now. One completed new equipment training, new equipment fielding. It is prepared for deployment. The other one is wrapping up its new equipment training right now. So the army does have one [Iron Dome battery] available for deployment if we get a request."

Ukraine has reaffirmed its need for air defense assets, including at the 13th meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group on June 15 in Brussels where Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said "I ask this contact group to continue to dig deep to provide Ukraine with the air-defense assets and munitions that it so urgently needs to protect its citizens." As we write, Russia's indiscriminate bombardment of Ukraine's sovereign territory continues, including in civilian areas. Following the destruction of the dam near Kherson, the Kremlin's continued shelling forced Ukrainian officials to suspend rescue efforts aimed at evacuating residents inundated by catastrophic flooding. And on June 13, a Russian barrage struck an apartment building in Kryvyi Rih, killing nearly a dozen people and injuring many more. Each Iron Dome battery can protect an area of approximately 150 square kilometers. We can save more Ukrainian lives today if we transfer those batteries. However, due to serious concerns, the Government of Israel has blocked the United States from transferring these batteries.

To be clear, we are not asking Israel to transfer its own Iron Dome systems which are critical to their own security, but simply to allow the United States to transfer our own batteries to help the people of Ukraine. If not practicable to transfer these assets to Ukraine, we ask that you look at other ways to assist, including moving them to another United States ally under the control and supervision of our own forces, thus freeing up other United States air defense assets to be transferred to bolster Ukraine's air defense needs and save more Ukrainian lives.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and we look forward to working with you to address Ukraine's air defense needs.

Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Lindsey O. Graham
United States Senator