

Hamas was developing technology to jam Iron Dome system in bombed AP building, Israel says

BY RON KAMPEAS JUNE 8, 2021



Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system, left, intercepts rockets fired by the Hamas movement toward southern Israel from the Gaza Strip, May 14, 2021. (Anas Baba/AFP via Getty Images)

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Israel's U.S. ambassador told The Associated Press that the Israeli army destroyed the building containing its Gaza bureau because Hamas was developing technology there that would jam Israel's Iron Dome anti-missile system.

Gilad Erdan, also the U.N. ambassador, met Monday with the wire service's president, Gary Pruitt, and its vice president of international news, Ian Phillips.

Hamas' research and development and intelligence arms were in the building, Erdan said.

"The unit was developing an electronic jamming system to be used against the Iron Dome defense system," Erdan said, according to a release by the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

Israel authorities told residents and workers in the building to evacuate about an hour before it bombed the 12-story building on May 15.

Hamas launched about 4,500 rockets at Israel during the May 10-21 conflict. Most hit open areas, but about 1,500 headed for built-up areas, and Iron Dome intercepted about 90%.

Erdan told Pruitt and Phillips that Israel did not believe that AP knew Hamas was headquartered in the building. A number of right-wing pro-Israel commentators on social media have accused the AP of knowingly working alongside Hamas.

“AP is one of the most important news agencies in the world and Israel doesn’t think that AP employees were aware it was being cynically used in this way by Hamas for a secret unit,” Erdan said in the release.

The ambassador said Israel was “willing to assist the Associated Press in rebuilding its offices and operations in Gaza.”