

Where Is Republican Sen. Rand Paul's Outrage at Hamas' Terrorist Actions?

Last week, Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul, a Republican, blocked what would have otherwise been unanimous passage of the Iron Dome funding bill, HR5323, providing Israel with \$1 billion to replenish its Iron Dome system following the war Israel endured with Palestinian Arab terrorists in Gaza this past May.

During the 11-day barrage, Hamas and other Palestinian Arab terror groups fired over 4,000 rockets at Israeli cities. The Iron Dome is a defensive system that shoots down short-range rockets with a 90% success rate, saving both the lives of countless Israelis, as well as Palestinian Arabs. Sen. Paul should know better.

In calling for unanimous Senate support, Connecticut Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal noted, "The Senate must pass HR 5323 as quickly as possible (the) Iron Dome has widespread bipartisan support in Congress as well it should. If the Iron Dome had failed, countless Israeli civilians would have been killed. The system performed exceptionally well, and it showed its necessity for both humanitarian and strategic defensive purposes."

Referring to Paul as the lone holdout, Blumenthal added, "I'm very concerned that one of my colleagues previously blocked the passage of this bill in the Senate. ... We cannot continue to use the relationship as a political football. It is against our own strategic interest. It violates our humanitarian values. ... where are my colleagues across the aisle when one of their own members is actively impeding Israel's ability to defend itself from Hamas? Where's their concern? Where's the

outrage?”

Paul defends his position from perspective of fiscal responsibility, “I’ve consistently opposed spending outside of the budget unless it’s offset by spending cuts elsewhere. It’s not only an opinion that I hold. It’s actually the law. It’s called pay as you go. We passed the law many years ago to try to balance our books by having people come forward with things that sound good, want to spend it, but not offset it by spending cuts elsewhere. I’m not disputing whether or not the extra billion dollars would help them. I’ll vote for the extra billion dollars.

“And that’s what I will propose today, but it should be offset with spending cuts elsewhere,” he says. “There’s a \$3 billion fund that is left over from money we were giving to the Afghan national government. There is no Afghan national government. The Taliban have taken over. Why wouldn’t it be a good thing to take money that might go to our enemy and actually give it to our ally? It makes perfect sense.”

Disapproval of Paul’s position, as principled as he thinks it is, has been wide. AIPAC, one of the foremost pro-Israel lobbying groups, tweeted that Paul’s “continued delay of Iron Dome funding undermines Israel’s security, risks innocent lives, makes war more likely, and emboldens Iran-backed terrorists.”

The American Jewish Committee tweeted, “Senator Paul continues to hold up Iron Dome funding in the Senate. Senator, it is time to follow through with your support of Israel.”

Jewish Democratic leaders have also added their criticism. Halie Soifer, CEO of the Jewish Democratic Council of America, said, “The House passed the bill overwhelmingly 83 days ago, and Senate Democrats unanimously support its passage. The one thing standing in its way is complete Republican apathy toward the intransigence of Senator Rand Paul.”

Democratic Majority for Israel President Mark Mellman said, "It is absolutely unconscionable that Senator Paul has turned his back on Israel and that Senate Republicans have simply gone along with it."

Criticism has not been exclusively Jewish, or Democratic. The CUFI Action Fund tweeted, "Yesterday, Senator Rand Paul once again blocked US support for Israel's Iron Dome. Kentucky is a pro-Israel state. Paul's obstructionism contradicts the will of his constituents, imperils civilians in the region and undermines American and Israeli security interests. Leader Schumer and leader McConnell must stop fringe politicians from hijacking American foreign policy and advance Iron Dome support without delay."

To the extent that Paul believes he's acting from a principled position of fiscal responsibility, it is bad policy and very bad optics on a number of levels. As a U.S. senator and an ophthalmologist, he should know better.

It's wrong to be the only senator preventing the U.S. from providing funding for the Iron Dome. Imagine that even anti-Israel senators such as Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren support it, and Paul doesn't. It cannot be overstated how this is not only a defensive weapon that protect the lives of countless Israeli civilians, but also Palestinian Arabs. Without the Iron Dome, were the majority of 4,000 Arab rockets to hit civilian targets in Israel, Israel would likely hit back in a way so punishing to the terrorists that many Palestinian Arab civilians behind whom the terrorists hide would be killed.

It puts Paul in the same position of being in the anti-Israel ideological camp as "the Squad," which strives to delegitimize Israel while emboldening the terrorists. Even if politics makes strange bedfellows, if I were Paul, I would not want to be in bed with Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib, Ilhan Omar, Ayanna Pressley and their ilk.

Ideally decisions and votes like this should not be partisan or political. But the fact is that because in a midterm election year, and two short years from a presidential race, it gives opponents in Congress, and possibly in his own state, the opportunity to say, “we support Israel, and Rand Paul (and the Republicans) does not.” Whether Paul cares or not, Republicans should, and should be vocal in calling him out.

Ironically, Paul is suggesting taking away money from supporting a terrorist regime in Afghanistan, but OK with limiting Israel’s defense from the same brand of Islamic terrorists.

Former President Jimmy Carter, another hostile critic of Israel, has justified terror by saying that it was bad for Palestinian optics, that it makes them look bad. I’m not sure Paul would want to be in the same camp as Carter on anything. By obstructing the Iron Dome funding, he has lined himself up with anti-Israel forces and has made himself look bad.

Maybe someone should call an ophthalmologist to help with Paul’s vision. {eo}

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