



State Comptroller Report | February 2023

Israel Defense Forces

Missile Boats in the Defense of the Maritime Space in Combat



Missile Boats in the Defense of the Maritime Space in Combat

Background

The State of Israel's coastline is the main gateway to its foreign trade. It stretches over 12 miles of maritime space under Israel's sovereignty (territorial waters). The maritime space expanse extending from the coast to a distance of about 115 nautical miles is the country's exclusive economic zone and is also called 'the economic waters', containing gas exploration and production facilities that are a significant energy source for the State of Israel. Various factors threaten this space. The mission of the Israeli Navy is to defend the State of Israel's maritime expanse, for which missile boats (Sa'ar 5 and 4.5 missile boats) are used. In recent years, the Israeli navy has formulated a concept for achieving maritime supremacy and has developed the firing capabilities of the various vessels.

Key Figures

**about 115
nautical
miles**

the State of Israel's economic waters border (at the farthest point from the coast)

**3
gas raft**

were in the State of Israel's economic waters during the audit period, and one backup LNG regasification vessel. Various factors threaten these facilities

**4 Sa'ar 6
missile
boats**


also called defense ships, were purchased for the protection of the economic waters. It is planned to complete their onboarding and their operation in the course of the 'Momentum' Multi-Year Plan

4 years

delay in operating four defense ships, planned for the beginning of 2019




Audit Actions


 From February 2020 to June 2022, the State Comptroller's Office alternately audited the missile boats in defense of maritime space in combat. The audit examined the building up of force of the Israeli Navy and its cooperation with the Air and Space Force. The audit was carried out in the IDF – at the Navy, the Planning Directorate, the Operations Directorate, the Military Intelligence Directorate, and the Air and Space Force. Completion examinations were conducted at the National Security Council in the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Energy.

The Knesset State Audit Committee Subcommittee decided not to bring this report in its entirety before the Knesset but to publish only parts thereof, to protect state security under Section 17 of the State Comptroller's Law, 1958 [Consolidated Version].

Key Findings



 **Meeting the 2013 Set Target of Supplying the Defense Ships** – as of the audit period, there is a delay of about four years in the completion of the supply and operation of the four defense ships, as according to Government Resolution B/53¹, the target was the beginning of 2019. The current expectation for the completion of this process is in 2023.

 **The Obsolescence of Certain Vessels and the Need to Replace Them** – although the operational need to replace certain ships was approved as early as 2018, at the audit end, June 2022, approval of the Planning Directorate and its budgeting had not yet been granted, approval that was supposed to be received according to the Gantt presented by the navy in September 2021.



Cooperation with the Air and Space Force – there is a constant effort of both the Navy and the Air and Space Force to promote handling the challenges of the economic water's protection. Both have joint annual work plans regulating joint training and building of

¹ On November 13, 2013, following the discovery of the gas fields, the Ministerial Committee for National Security Affairs (the State Security Cabinet) decided (Resolution B/53) to employ the IDF with protecting the vital interests of the State of Israel in the field of energy located in the exclusive economic zone.



force, planning and debriefing procedures, the execution, and the force allocated to each training.

Key Recommendations

- 💡 It is recommended that the Chief of Staff direct an examination of the operational need of the missile boats force in the Navy and formulate, accordingly, an updated force-building plan that will consider all IDF missions, including the Navy's missions – current, emerging, and future – and the developing threats.
- 💡 It is recommended that the IDF and the Ministry of Defense carry out a lesson-learning procedure to meet the supply schedule of the four defense ships about matters under their purview.
- 💡 It is recommended that the Planning Directorate and the Navy, each in their field, monitor the project to replace certain vessels and ensure that every effort is made to promote their replacement, including control over the budgeting and its implementation.

Sa'ar 6 Type Missile Boat (defense ship)



Source: the Navy, IDF.



Summary

In recent years, there has been a significant change in the threats in the maritime environment: essential strategic facilities for the search and production of gas, which are critical sources of energy for the State of Israel, have been established and are threatened by various factors. Given the development of the threats, it is recommended that the Chief of Staff direct an examination of the operational need of the Navy's missile boat force and formulate a force-building plan accordingly. It is also recommended that the plan be implemented and enforced periodically according to the updated reference scenarios.