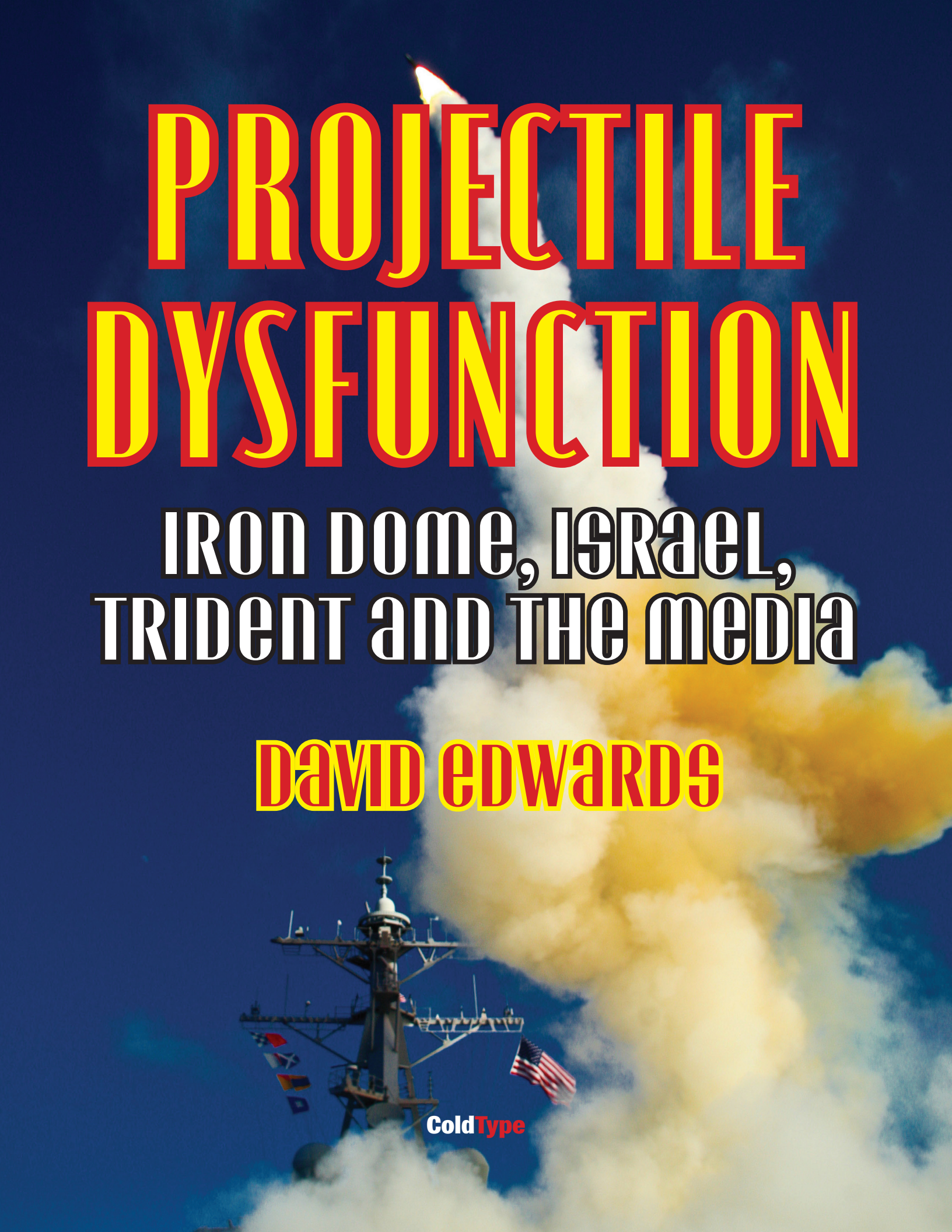
PROJECTILE DYSFUNCTION
IRON DOME, ISRAEL, TRIDENT AND THE MEDIA
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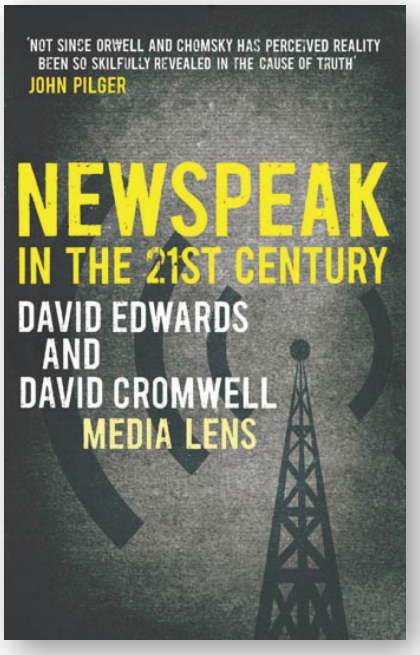

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PROJECTILE DYSFUNCTION

IRON DOME, ISRAEL, TRIDENT AND THE MEDIA

DAVID EDWARDS

In May, the BBC reported Barack Obama's request to Congress for $200 million in military aid to assist Israel's construction of a short-range rocket defence system, Iron Dome. The funding will be in addition to the $3 billion in military aid the US annually sends to Israel. A BBC online article explained:

"The system is designed to shoot down mortars and rockets from Gaza or Southern Lebanon with guided missiles."

Details were provided:

"Iron Dome was conceived and developed in Israel following the Lebanon war of 2006, during which Hezbollah launched about 4,000 rockets into northern Israel. Southern Israel has also come under fire, with thousands of rockets and mortars fired by Palestinian militants."

14 Israelis had been killed by mostly home-made rockets fired from Gaza over the previous seven years as against 5,000 Palestinians killed by Israeli forces.

The BBC failed to mention that during the 2006 war Lebanon was subjected to 12,000 Israeli bombing raids, 2,500 navy shells, 100,000 army shells and 4.6 million cluster bombs. (Jane's Defence Weekly, 'The war in numbers,' August 23, 2006.)

Even prior to the December 27, 2008 Operation Cast Lead offensive – when Israel attacked Gaza with hundreds of bombing raids and drone attacks, and thousands of artillery and tank shells – 14 Israelis had been killed by mostly home-made rockets fired from Gaza over the previous seven years as against 5,000 Palestinians killed by Israeli forces. Some 1,400 Palestinians were massacred in the

Cast Lead assault.

The BBC reported the US administration's "unshakeable commitment" to Israeli security, adding that Obama "recognised the threat posed by missiles and rockets fired by Hamas and Hezbollah".

Obama did not recognise the threat to Palestinians posed by Israeli forces and expressed no "unshakeable commitment" to Palestinian security. This ought to be surprising, given that the mainstream media habitually present the United States as an "honest broker" in the conflict. In 2006, Channel 4's Jonathan Rugman declared:

"If you think in the last week the US has given up its role as honest broker in the Middle East then now, it seems, they've taken it back." (Channel 4 News, July 21, 2006)

In 2000, a BBC 1 lunchtime news report described then President Bill Clinton as "the man who has spent eight years trying to bring permanent peace to the Middle East". (BBC1 Lunchtime News, October 16, 2000)

Edward Herman commented recently:

"U.S. officials repeat day-after-day that our 'solidarity' with Israel is an 'unshakeable bond,' that there is no 'space' between us and Israel on the issues, and that we have an 'absolute commitment to Israel's security' (Hillary Clinton). A large fraction of congress and the Senate appear regularly at AIPAC [The American Israel Public Affairs Committee] annual meetings to virtually pledge allegiance to the State of Israel, and Vice President Joseph Biden has publicly declared himself 'a Zionist,' with Israel 'the center of my work as a United States Senator and now as vice president of the United States…'"

"There is also no 'honest broker' in this fraudulent 'peace process' – honest brokering is inconsistent with complete 'solidarity' and a 'central commitment' to one side." (Herman, "'Protecting Israel's Ethnic Cleansing" — Deceptively Called "Protecting Israel's Security",' Z Magazine, May 2010)

It seems there are no investigative journalists at the BBC willing to check the claim that tests on the system have been "completed" so that the system is ready for action

This is blindingly obvious, but is somehow not an issue, not a reality, for mainstream journalists. The powers that be pretend that honest brokering is consistent with massively funding and arming one side – the media generally go along with the deception. As with the above BBC report, the mainstream typically portrays Palestinian violence as dominant with Israel merely retaliating. This also, Herman explains, is a lie:

"In reality, the primary violence is Israeli dispossession, which has taken Palestinian land and water for decades, under U.S. and other enlightened states' protection. Over the years the Palestinians have resisted, mainly peaceably, sometimes by violence, but with very much higher casualty rates suffered by the poorly armed Palestinians (over 20-1 prior to the second intifada, when the rate dropped to 3 or 4 to 1—rising to 100 to 1 in the Gaza war)."

No Logic Whatsoever

The BBC commented on the status of the Iron Dome technology:

"Israel completed tests on the system in January. Officials say the next phase in its development is its integration into the Israeli army."

It seems there are no investigative journalists at the BBC willing to check the claim that tests on the system have been "completed" so that the system is ready for action. As for questioning who might stand to gain from hyping this expensive technology, that is also not within the remit of BBC journalism. By contrast, the Jerusalem Post quotes the view of Tel Aviv

University professor and noted military analyst Reuven Pedatzur:

"The Iron Dome is all a scam. The flight-time of a Kassam rocket to Sderot is 14 seconds, while the time the Iron Dome needs to identify a target and fire is something like 15 seconds. This means it can't defend against anything fired from fewer than five kilometers; but it probably couldn't defend against anything fired from 15 km., either."

Pedatzur adds: "Considering the fact that each Iron Dome missile costs about $100,000 and each Kassam $5, all the Palestinians would need to do is build and launch a ton of rockets and hit our pocketbook."

A second rocket system, David's Sling, is even less workable, according to Pedatzur:

"Each one of its missiles costs $1 million, and Hizbullah has well over 40,000 rockets. This issue has no logic to it whatsoever."

Venturing even further beyond the BBC sphere of thinkable thought, we can note that the whole issue of missile defence – which has so far cost US taxpayers alone $100 billion – has long been awash with fraudulent claims. As Greg Thielmann, Senior Fellow at the Arms Control Association, has noted:

"Getting to ground truth on strategic missile defense is a bit like looking for a faithful reflection in the distorted mirrors of a carnival fun house — nothing is quite what it seems.

"Performance details are shrouded in secrecy on both strategic ballistic missile defenses and the countermeasures that would be used to defeat them. Neither strategic ballistic missile offenses nor defenses have been used in combat. Many experts to whom the public has access have a vested interest in spinning evaluations of their capabilities." (Greg Thielmann, Arms Control Association, 'Strategic Missile Defense: A Reality Check'; http://www.armscontrol.org/system/files/TAB_StrategicMissileDefense.pdf)

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During the 1991 Gulf War, the mostly male armchair generals of the media swooned before the power and precision of the Patriot anti-missile interceptor. The Guardian gushed:

"The Patriot, a surface-to-air missile, is first among equals of the equipment demonstrated in the Gulf conflict. Although Raytheon and the Pentagon credited the Patriot with only a 'secondary anti-missile capability,' it has succeeded against Iraqi Scuds on each occasion it has been called on. Its performance belies concerns which led the Israelis to decide against buying it." (Francis Tusa, 'War in the Gulf: Patriot makers race to keep pace with booming demand,' The Guardian, January 22, 1991)

Robert Fisk wrote in the Independent:

"We are all beginning to feel rather fond of the Patriot missile… The Patriots have performed almost as well as the maker's advertisements would have you believe. In Saudi Arabia, the best estimate of its success is 12 out of 16 Scuds destroyed." (Fisk, 'Crumpled stovepipe that could still break up the coalition,' The Independent, January 24, 1991)

Thanks to comments such as these appearing right across the media, the US defence industry was "on a high", Larry Black noted in the Independent:

"Each time the trading-room television monitors replay those videos of cruise missiles attacking a Baghdad bunker, demand for General Dynamics and McDonnell Douglas stock explodes. For every Scud knocked out of the sky by a Patriot missile, America's defence-electronics contractors notch another dollar on their share prices." (Black, 'US defence industry

on a high,' The Independent, January 26, 1991)

Cynics might have put two and two – the claims of knocked out Scuds and the exploding stocks – together. The Patriot system was declared fully 98% successful in intercepting and destroying Scud missiles during the war. Professor Ted Postol of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology was subsequently asked by Congress to investigate the 98% claim. Postol commented:

"It became clear that it wasn't even close to intercepting *any* targets, let alone some targets." (Postol, Great Military Blunders, Channel 4, March 2, 2000, original emphasis)

Last year, Obama similarly hailed a new generation of antimissile defenses, as "proven and effective." These comments were based on a Pentagon assessment that the SM-3 (Standard Missile 3) had intercepted 84 per cent of incoming targets in tests. Alas, an examination of results from 10 of the allegedly successful tests – again by Postol working with George N. Lewis – found only one or two successful intercepts — a success rate of 10 to 20 per cent. Postol's comments were again sobering:

"The system is highly fragile and brittle and will intercept warheads only by accident, if ever."

In an article for the Arms Control Association, Lewis and Postol reviewed a key document published by the Obama administration in February: the Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report:

"… a review of the actual state of missile defense technologies reveals that this new vision put forth by the report is nothing more than a fiction and that the policy strategy that follows from these technical myths could well lead to a foreign policy disaster… the ground-based midcourse ballistic missile defense (GMD) system, which, according to the report, currently protects the continental United States from ICBM attack… has only been tested in carefully orchestrated scenarios that have been designed to hide fundamental flaws and produce appearances of success".

Last year, several retired military officers – Field Marshal Lord Bramall, the former head of the armed forces, and two senior generals – said that renewing Trident was a waste of money

The same ludicrous, but lucrative, deceptions surround much high-tech military spending. In Britain, the cost of replacing the Trident nuclear missile system and building and equipping two large aircraft carriers will be as much as £130bn.

Just as it is clear that anti-missile shields are currently worthless, so it is clear that Trident is a Cold War folly. Last year, several retired military officers – Field Marshal Lord Bramall, the former head of the armed forces, and two senior generals – said that renewing Trident was a waste of money:

"Nuclear weapons have shown themselves to be completely useless as a deterrent to the threats and scale of violence we currently, or are likely to, face – particularly international terrorism; and the more you analyse them the more unusable they appear." (Letter, 'UK does not need a nuclear deterrent, The Times, January 16, 2009)

They added:

"Our independent deterrent has become virtually irrelevant except in the context of domestic politics. Rather than perpetuating Trident, the case is much stronger for funding our Armed Forces with what they need to meet the commitments actually laid upon them."

Similarly, Lord Guthrie, the former Chief of the Defence Staff, has argued for the cheapest nuclear deterrent rather than a replacement for Trident. General Sir Richard Dannatt, who last year retired as head of the British army, agrees.

In reality, the logic of military spending has been reversed. It is not that awesome weapons are required to counter awesome threats – threats are needed to *justify* high-tech weapons. There is no terrrifying Soviet, Muslim or Martian plan to conquer the West. There is despair and anger expressed using the poor person's weapon of war – labelled "terrorism" by our own high-tech terrorists – that would vanish, instantly, if Western elites stopped inventing motives and machines for attacking innocent people. But as the leftist British musician Billy Bragg once sang:

"War, what is it good for? It's good for business."

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