

*Incidents like helicopter downing in Syria prove that these weapons are becoming harder to track*

Washington, D.C. – Today, Rep. Steve Israel (D – Huntington) warned that shoulder-fired missiles are becoming increasingly harder to track and control as they end up in the wrong hands. Reports this week indicate that Syrian rebels shot down a Syrian military helicopter with a shoulder-fired missile, which many fear could be smuggled away from rebels and used by terrorists to target civilian airliners. Rep. Israel has been a leading voice in Congress for protecting against the threat of shoulder-fired missiles and is the author of legislation that would retrofit American-flagged commercial jets with anti-missile countermeasures.

Rep. Israel said, “Shoulder-fired missiles are a serious threat to our aviation system, our economy and the traveling public. The incident in Syria is a reminder that, if shoulder-fired missiles end up in the wrong hands, we lose control over who can access them.”

Developed more than thirty years ago to protect small groups of ground troops from air assaults, shoulder-fired missiles (also known as MANPADS, or “MAN Portable Air Defense Systems) have proved highly effective at targeting aircraft. The ability of terrorists to accurately target aircraft from as far as three miles away makes it very difficult to protect against the weapons. Reports from the CIA, the State Department, and other government agencies indicate that shoulder-fired missiles have hit dozens of civilian aircraft since the 1970s and killed hundreds of people. They accounted for most of the planes brought down in the first Gulf War and are responsible for a number of shoot-downs during the recent war in Iraq.