

Virtual CRT Israel Iran Missile War

[Mr. Riki Ellison]

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, from Golden, Colorado. Just a brilliant day here at the home, the center of U.S. Homeland Missile Defense here at NORTHCOM NORAD. I'm here, I've just gotten back from Germany. We have a very strong topic today, and we are very honored to bring this to you to look at the Israeli-Iran Missile War in depth. With two of our experts in Israel right now that have withstood the barrage that happened. And, we have two other experts here that can really offer some significant perspectives that really haven't been seen too much over the past week or two.

I'm Riki Ellison, I'm the founder and chairman of the Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance. And our whole mission, our 20-year-plus mission, is to make the world safer through the development, deployment, and evolution of missile defense.

We are just very honored and proud of Israel. Shalom. Getting involved, I had a personal visit in 1983 in January, stayed on a Kibbutz at the end of the Lebanon War and have been to Israel over 40-plus years to see the movement of missile defense more than any other country in the world. And going back to the 1983 SDI speech, President Reagan put the first MOU with Israel to create missile defense capability. And Israel took that and we backed them.

And the shift that happened in the late 90s during the wars, the ability for the U.S. Missile Defense Agency to support and create weapon systems for Israel with them. From the Green Pine, the Iron Dome, THAAD, the love of it, the active participation in spending the funding of tax dollars to defend the sacred country has been at the forefront of our missile defense evolution and development.

So we've had a shift in warfare. And I think you can start right away looking, we had a podcast on this with the Ukrainians attacking the Russian bombers. And that was a preemptive left of launch and left of missile defense launch, a missile defense campaign to be able to defeat these weapons before they come. On June 13th last week, we saw Israel take it to another level in left of launch type thought process and campaign in combat. But for Israel and Ukraine, the essence of having an ability to defend against a counterattack, to be able to do that, enabled them to do that. And the missile defense capabilities that have protected their population from volumes and volumes is astonishing to see and to take great gratitude for Israel to be able to protect its people. So we're seeing a shift with that type of fight now. And it's a missile fight to be able to attack and be able to defend.

So with that, I'd like to introduce our four speakers. Tal Inbar is a close associate of MDAA. He's been with us for 20 plus years. He is the world's expert on missiles and studies them, studies the threat missiles, particular Iran, particular North Korea. He's world famous and he is an MDAA fellow.

We have Shachar Shohat, who is a former Aero Brigadier General Commander of the Israeli Missile Forces. He has been a leader, known him for 20 plus years. There, he is, I think he's been on duty right now, active or reservist duty there. He is a prominent leader in missile defense, coming in at the birth of some of the missile defense systems that they use today. To add that, we have Jamie Jarrard, former Lieutenant General. He spent a lot, well, I like to think he's a badass. Special Forces, I don't want to use the D word, but he's a Special Forces

guy, and former CD over in the Pacific with the U.S. Army Pacific. To have him give us a perspective of the Special Forces application into this fight.

And then we have the former Undersecretary of Policy under President Trump, John Rood, who is distinguished in a phenomenal career on policy and on missile defense throughout his 20, 30 years. So we'd like to start off right away with Tal, because you're in the fight, and give us a perspective of what's going on.

[Mr. Tal Inbar]

Okay, thank you, Riki, for arranging this meeting. Actually, we spoke about it since the beginning of the missile war. So in about five minutes, I will give a short presentation without any slides about the situation. So we are almost a week from the beginning of the Israeli operation against Iran. Iran's nuclear capabilities and ballistic missiles capabilities. And this is indeed unprecedented event.

It will be studied and learned for years, so decades from now. Because we have a mixture of air power, special operations, you mentioned before we got online, the Mossad operation. And what we see is gradually, we degrade the capabilities of Iran to fire missiles, but just to put it into perspective, roughly 400 ballistic missiles were fired already. It's a low number relative to what we thought we are going to see. And the first response of Iran was almost 20 hours after the initial attack. So this is something, again, that we wouldn't expect to see.

We thought that we are going to see an immediate retaliatory salvo of ballistic missiles. Iran is using several types of ballistic missiles. Some are liquid propelled, and most of them are operated in well-known positions near what Iran was calling the missile cities in Khorrambad and Kermanshah and other places that we all know, in three distinct zones, the west part of Iran, the middle part, and the eastern part of Iran. And we see Qadr missiles, which are some upgrades of the Shahab-3. And we see Imad missiles, which is a more accurate version of the Qadr. Both sides were fired on Israel during the two strikes in, the first one in April and the second one in October, 2024.

So no surprises here regarding the missiles. And at least one type of solid propelled missile, which is the Khaibar Shakan, roughly 400 kilometers in range. The Imad could reach 1,800 kilometers with a warhead of more than 700 kilograms, anything between 500 to 750 kilograms, the warhead. And we see counter missile operations on the ground of Iran, and we see it from the air. We have a lot of aircraft with pilots, without pilots, traveling and hunting launchers. It reminds me a little bit of 1991, but this time with a huge success. And we degrade the forces by the hundreds. So at least for this afternoon, the figure is roughly 300 launchers on the ground that were hit. And we have several attacks on the underground facilities of Iran in various areas of the country.

And I was surprised not to see any single missile fired from a silo, from the underground ballistic missiles installations. And so this came as a surprise for me, at least. In the beginning, in the first hour of the attack, targeting, killing of most of the commanders of the IRGC rockets and Space Force, a lot of military high ranking officers were taken down. So this could give some explanation on the delay in Iran's response. We didn't see any huge salvos of missiles. The first night we saw the most, but roughly 100 was the most large one until now. Iran also used some UAVs. All of them were shot down. Most were shot down outside the territory of Israel.

And we see a huge partnership with the United States and the THAAD missile is working hard as well. We saw several times interceptions by THAAD missiles against the Houthi missiles from Yemen. And just today to add a little bit, we destroyed the Arak nuclear reactor, which is not active, but it could produce in the future if it was operated, it was designed to produce plutonium. So it was taken out also today. A lot of infrastructures related to the missile industry were targeted and most were hit very heavily. And just today, several attacks against the infrastructure of ballistic missiles, components, fuel factories, guidance systems, and so on.

So again, now we are seeing a smaller amount of missiles fired to Israel, but today we saw a devastating attack on Beersheba's hospital. It's in the Negev. So a direct hit at the hospital and direct hit in the business sector of Ramat Gan with many buildings that were hit. So it is not always 100% success in interceptions, but we can see the damage. And also today, this is the last comment for now, we saw for the first time the use of some munitions in one of the missiles coming from Iran. Of course, this is not new, we know about it for years, but this is the first use.

So it could inflict some damage to civilians, but targeting military installations, for example, or any Air Force bases, like for example, it is not so efficient and the damage is contained. So we didn't see, and this is the last point actually, another surprise for me that we didn't see until now the use of the largest and heaviest missile in Iran's inventory, the Qoham Char, which is a variant of the Hwasong-10 from North Korea. It could be for the future, they might save something for the day after, but this is something that we didn't see until now. So this is just a very, very short roundup of the events.

[Mr. Riki Ellison]

Thank you, Tal. Was there collaboration between Russia, China, in creating those missiles or the inventory that's been thrown at you? And are they doing similar tactics to what Russia's doing to Ukraine, or is this a less sophisticated fight than that fight with 500 drones as well as ballistic missiles and all that? How do you distinguish between two types of missile fight right now?

[Mr. Tal Inbar]

Yeah, first we saw a coordinated attack of drones, cruise missiles and ballistic missiles in April, 2024, but almost all of the UAVs and 99% of the cruise missiles were shot down outside of the territory of Israel. So Iran decided to use more ballistic missiles. There was a huge salvo of UAVs, this was the first response.

[Mr. Riki Ellison]

So Iran changed its strategy because you were so successful in the drone to do ballistic?

[Mr. Tal Inbar]

That's probably the case. And they are not so coordinated in terms of the specific areas that they want to hit, but they spreading now smaller salvos, five missiles, 10 missiles, 20 missiles, but it's throughout the day. And some attacks during daylight was a novelty for Iran in comparison with the both attacks of 2024. So we see that they are adapting to the current situation, but we also saw some-

[Mr. Riki Ellison]

They're adapting to your defensive capabilities.

[Mr. Tal Inbar]

Yeah, adapting to, I believe, to the capabilities of at least the successful interceptions here. But what we saw in some cases that the crews, some crews of the ballistic missiles of Iran just left the missile with the truck and ran out. And we have some documentation from Iranian people that suddenly they saw something, parking near a highway or something like that. So this is another psychological effect.

[Mr. Riki Ellison]

Can you just go back on the dual part? Is there reality in that or not, that Russia and China are supporting-

[Mr. Tal Inbar]

There is no clear connection between Russian technologies and Iranian missiles. And the same applies to North Korea because of course the heritage is the same, but both started from SCUD and SHA-3 or Hwasong-7, but today the two programs, that of Iran and that of North Korea took a different path completely. So we don't see any transfer of technology, nor that Iran is in need to get outside technology.

[Mr. Riki Ellison]

And last point, there is a lot of debris. As you note that some of these don't separate, how much of a problem is there debris on your population versus the missiles? And are we intercepting debris? Do you have enough inventory to do that if that was targeted?

[Mr. Tal Inbar]

Of course, we cannot go into details on our inventory, but it is a clear fact that you can see on TV, for example, people that are taking pictures of the interceptions, sometimes you can see clearly an arrow or a David's sling going up. And at the end, you can see a lot of white smoke from Iron Dome. So Iron Dome could, of course, intercept the large chunks of incoming missiles. And it is also something for last resort if you miss the other layers.

[Mr. Riki Ellison]

Okay, well, thank you for that explanation. I'm sure we're going to get more questions for you. All right, Shachar.

[Brigadier General (Retired) Shachar Shohat, IDF]

Okay, first of all, thank you for inviting me. It gives me a great pleasure to be among these distinguished people here on the screen, John, Jamie and Tal. And I would like to take this opportunity upfront to thank the Trump administration and the entire American people supporting us in that conflict that we are having.

So I would like to speak from the strategic point of view to the tactic point of view. I would refer a few things about the topics that we spoke about last time regarding the loss of deterrence. And I would like also to refer about the dialogue between offense and defense and how we are implementing it in this conflict. So just a short reminder, I was mentioning President Roosevelt announcement about speak softly and carry a big stick. And I claim that we lost the deterrence since our enemy didn't think seriously that we are going to use this big stick. And even after President Biden say don't, we saw the Iranian attack on Israel.

And I think one of the outcome of the loss of the deterrence of the state of Israel was our September 11 or our Pearl Harbor experience on the October the 7th, 2023, when we lost more than 1000 people, a civilian and soldiers on a brutal Hamas attack on the Southern part

of Israel. That was our wake up call. And since that we had to fight in 70 different fronts from Hamas in the South to Hezbollah in the North part, Syrian, the Yemen Houthis, the Iranians and also some Iraqi militia that also joined the party and they tried to attack us 360 degrees.

So, but I think as the American, the great American nation, we recovered after the 7th of October. And we stood up as a nation, as armed forces and we start dealing differently with these specific fronts. And in the last seven days, as Tal mentioned, the time of Iran become and it become with the preemptive attack that was pretty impressive based on a very accurate intelligence that we gained during the last years and the preparation we made.

And we attack, of course, the infrastructure of the nuclear capability. We attack the air defense system and we attack the entire TBM array of Iran. And I think after we paved the corridor from Israel to Iran, a 1000 mile corridor, air corridor, walking through Iraq to the West part of Tehran, the West part of Iran, again, air superiority. And I even dare to say that we gain air supremacy during that time. So these days, the Israeli Air Force, the attack capability of the Israeli Air Force are demonstrated on daily basis in the West part of Iran. And I think this preemptive attack was the essential element in the defense of the state of Israel.

Tal just mentioned the number, the figures of the tactical ballistic missile that we have to face. And that's a short or small figure about what we expect. Also because of the preemptive attack and the attacking of the value change of the tactical ballistic missile. The inventory, the launchers mainly, and that's the reason we are facing a small challenge that we expected regarding the ground air defense system. And I think there is a pretty good success so far. Although there are hard people and of course, damage for infrastructure, but there is no critical damage for a strategic side.

We kept our offensive capability and all the Israeli Air Force are operated on a full scale during the entire seven days. And regarding our ground air defense system, there are two main threats that we are dealing with. One is the UAV, UAS, which we are doing, I think, a very good job. Although there was the swarms of hundreds of UAVs, there is no, I think, we got the lesson learned from the Hezbollah for the last two years that we had a lot of challenges regarding that threat. And this time we are prepared very well and almost no harm from UAV. The tactical ballistic missile, which is the second type of threat, is something that we are dealing together, shoulder to shoulder with our allies from America.

I think all the Juniper Cobra, all the exercise, all the interoperability that we created in the last, let's say, 20 years, have paid off the investment. We bring the THAAD, we bring the Aegis ship with the SM-3, we are both doing a tremendous job. Interoperability is working very well from the early stage of the shared early warning by the satellite, giving all the Israeli population alert going into the shelter, and of course the interception phase.

And I think the interoperability is working very good. I think we demonstrate the capability to work David's Fling, Iron Dome, and Arrow with the U.S. system without any issues. So for those who claim that the Israeli system cannot work within the U.S. system, I think this is a clear message that yes, we can. I think interoperability is not only between the system, it's also about the people. And I think the mutual cohesion, the mutual respect, the combined doctrine that we create, the combined training are essential to the success that we see so far. And when it's not sufficient, of course we have the passive defense capability in Israel.

People are trained, know how to go to shelter, very disciplined, and that create a very small amount, relatively very small amount of casualty, and they give us the capability and the confidence that we can prevail. So I think, and I'm referring to my early comments regarding the loss of deterrence, I think we are gaining back the deterrence. I think the enemy now knows that we have the will to use the power when it's necessary.

I think the alliance between the Israeli and U.S. is also a part of this deterrence. For a country like Israel, alliance with the superpower like the U.S., of course augment our capability and help us with the deterrence. And I hope this time we will get rid of this threat for the sake of the entire region, the entire Middle East.

I think it's not only about Israel, it's our allies from the East side of Israel, and countries that already joined to the Ibrahim Agreement and countries that hopefully will join in the near future to this agreement. And again, I think it will also project the deterrence of the United States for other regions in the world, like in the Far East for China or Russia. And I think this is a great opportunity to the entire world, not only to this region, to project the values of Western democratic countries.

[Mr. Riki Ellison]

Thank you. Thank you. Well done. Shachar, is this the new norm now to fight, to attack first, to strike first like you did, to take out and then have the ability to sustain defense on it? This seems to be now a new way of warfare, but it's been done in front of everybody. We've never got to this kind of stage and it's from your perspective, obviously it's a great return on investment for doing that, to be able to do that. Is that the way we're going to fight policy-wise now, to go get the stuff before they attack us?

[Brigadier General (Retired) Shachar Shohat, IDF]

Hopefully we don't need it, but that's what used to be Israeli strategy. If you remember the Six Days War, there was also a preventive attack. The State of Israel had no strategic depth, no depth at all. So we cannot do the fight on our very small land. And I think since that, also the 73 War, that we try to contain the threat and try to just be peaceful and not do it. So the outcome was that we were attacked in advance and we could not use our capability because we caught surprise.

So this is not really an offensive mean. This is offensive as a part of a defensive strategy of a small country that has no strategic depth. But if it's necessary to do that, we have to do it. And the reason that we didn't do it in the last, let's say two or three decades, create what I call our Pearl Harbor issue during October 7th, 2023. We lost the deterrence and we got by surprise and we suffer a very big crisis and lost a lot of life, but we cannot afford ourselves. But so it's only as a necessity, but if there is a necessity, you have to do it. When you do it, you will make the war shorter and I think better for yourself. So sometimes you have to do it.

[Mr. Riki Ellison]

Yeah, absolutely. You've set the precedent. But you mentioned that you had to withstand 300, you shot down 300 after this. You also mentioned that there is an end to this. At some point they can't produce as much. How are they still able after these preventive strikes to the production facilities, still be able to fire that many missiles? Is there an end to taking their ability to fire volume by counter-strike?

[Brigadier General (Retired) Shachar Shohat, IDF]

So, Iran, first of all, is 75 times bigger than Israel. 75 times bigger than Israel. And it's about 1000 miles away from Israel. And regarding tactical ballistic missile, since what I just

mentioned, they became in the last decade, a superpower of tactical ballistic missile. I'm talking about thousands of missiles with the variety of ranges and capability. They get a lot of experience from the Baghdad-Tehran war during the 80s, a decade of war between Iraq and Iran of tactical ballistic missile.

And the regime put all the effort of the country, all the capability of the money that they are getting from the oil, taking from the people and invest in the infrastructure of tactical ballistic missile and so on. So I think we are talking about more than 2000 tactical ballistic missile. We are talking about hundreds of launchers, mobile launchers that they have. So relatively to the figures that I've just mentioned, what we see is about maybe 10% from what used to be the capability.

[Mr. Riki Ellison]

So you're taking out 10% of that, that's still a tremendous volume that you still gotta deal with, that's coming at you in the future, right?

[Brigadier General (Retired) Shachar Shohat, IDF]

No, I said the attack took, I think, 30% to 40% of the capability already, the attack. So now we are dealing with the left 60% of the capability. So I believe we need a few more days if the US will intervene and a few more weeks if we'll have to do it by ourselves.

[Mr. Riki Ellison]

Can you just talk to the, I know it's different in Israel, but the war, the cost war of attrition here, because if you're shooting, some of these are very expensive interceptors to do that and how that demand and US is supporting that with you, as we've seen other demands for these missiles and other regions for the US, we can even apply the golden dome coming that that inventory is very scarce. And is Israel able to produce all this on its own or do they need the US? How are we winning that cost curve? Or is Iran winning that? Or are we winning that?

[Brigadier General (Retired) Shachar Shohat, IDF]

First of all, it's a big challenge. I think one of the lessons learned from the last conflict, also from the Russian-Ukrainian war, that the wars are becoming longer and longer and you need enough inventory to start the war because this is something that you cannot produce in few hours or in few days. It's not an out of the shelf product. You need to invest. I think the generosity of the US administration along the year help us a lot to be prepared to this day and to have the right inventory for this day. I think, and I mentioned the US augment with the THAAD and the Aegis and they came also with quite a large inventory that give us the ability to face these figures that we are having here. And I think this also point the importance of alliances around the world in order to share stocks during a war, in order to fight this type of conflict.

[Mr. Riki Ellison]

Thank you, Shachar. Just out of curiosity, how was the other Arabic nations? They stood down from your perspective. They obviously did not get engaged with this. Do you see that they are neutral to this? They're not standing up against this?

[Brigadier General (Retired) Shachar Shohat, IDF]

I cannot say that they were against us. I think they understand that this is also for the good.

[Mr. Riki Ellison]

For the region?

[Brigadier General (Retired) Shachar Shohat, IDF]

Yes, for themselves. They are also threatened by Iran. Iran is not only our problem. Maybe it's our only existing problem, but it's a problem to the entire world. It's a problem to the entire Europe. When they are getting a 4,000 kilometer or 3,000 mile tactical ballistic missile, this is not against Israel. This is against somebody else that are in such a distance.

[Mr. Riki Ellison]

Thank you. Thank you for a great discussion. All right, we're gonna pass it over to you, Jamie, for your perspective. We're gonna switch over to the American perspective and expertise in special warfare.

[Lieutenant General (Retired) Jamie Jarrard]

Thanks, Riki. And thanks to Shachar and Tal for their perspective and continuing to keep them in our thoughts and prayers throughout this. You know, a lot of good discussion so far. And it continues to let me think about the implications for the United States as we do look to the future. And I was listening to a podcast yesterday and it was talking about the overuse of the word existential. And so I don't wanna be too dramatic, but I do think we are in somewhat of a revolution of military affairs as opposed to an evolution.

As we look to Ukraine and their strategic operation with tremendous success here recently, and now we look at the Israeli situation and the phenomenal success that they have had. You know, what does that mean to the United States? And I think the threat only increases. You know, Ukraine was able to do what they did with pretty unsophisticated low-end technology. Israel is obviously using very high-end technology, but they also use some low-end technology as well with their special operation forces in the Mossad inside of Iran. And so as those threats continue to increase, and you were just talking about the cost curve, how are we preparing our defense so that we can continue to deter our adversaries from attacking us?

And I like the way that Shachar said it again. It requires a very capable and effective defense, but within that defense needs to be an offensive capability that can be used proactively and preemptively if required. And I think Mr. Rood can talk about the policy implications of all that better than I can, but I do think that we in the United States need to be thinking more deeply about this, just like we talked about in our last round table when we were discussing Ukraine. And I think in some aspects we have been and we are. As I think about the special operations forces that were used by Israel, and I have had the opportunity to visit Israel numerous times and have the utmost respect for their special operations forces. They are bold and fortune favors the bold and they are absolutely bold and audacious.

And just like with Ukraine, it will probably be a significant amount of time before we truly understand what all happened there. It will be a significant amount of time before we truly understand all of the preparations that went into Israel's preemptive attack. But you've got to believe that it has been months, if not years in the making to enable the success that they've had so quickly.

And that requires a lot of special operations forces or interagency with the Mossad that were, and they assumed a significant amount of risk to be able to be in position with the capabilities that they had on hand to do the damage and coordinate that with the Air Force, a very, very sophisticated and effective attack. But I think as we think about the special operations forces

or the Mossad, the interagency teams that were able to do this, the benefits of those forces is that they buy down risk. You know, and they do that in numerous ways.

One, it's just the human confirmation of all source intelligence. We have so many sensors that are out there and they're telling us so much, whether that's cyber sensors, whether it's space sensors, whether it's air breathing sensors, they're all giving us a lot of data. But having a human on the ground that can confirm that is so much more comfortable for senior officials as they look to make decisions.

It can, humans also are able to place capabilities at key locations to enable the operation to be successful. And that could be non-kinetic, whether it's in planning cyber tools at specific locations, whether it's, you know, electronic warfare capabilities, but it also could be the kinetic effects that they bring to the fight. Just like we were seeing happen in Ukraine, it appears that the Israeli forces, whether it was Mossad or special operations forces employed UAVs with kinetic effects on them to great success in coordination with the Israeli Air Force.

And again, the synchronization of those operations appears to have been very, very good. And that is not something that can be done easily. And so my hat's off for the sophistication of their attacks. But again, kinetic and non-kinetic effects can be emplaced by... and along with it, it does appear that some of those key leaders, whether they were government leaders or military leaders or nuclear scientists that were assassinated, appears to have been done by humans. And that is also a key capability for special operations forces, because being able to discriminate between a civilian and a targeted individual is not easy to do from long distance away. And so having the ability to have a human on the ground do that is a huge benefit.

And then the last area is just the ability to confirm the battle damage assessment. I don't know how many times that we have seen through imagery or airplanes that are flying at 30,000 feet. Somebody has said that we actually did something in the United States history and ultimately ended up like that we didn't. And because we thought we did something, then we went on and did other things. Without the truth that we did not accomplish the mission that we needed to, and that ended up coming back to bite us a little bit. And so all those things with special operation forces allow us to be much more effective and to provide the data and the information to senior leaders that enable them to make informed decisions and truly understand the risk to the force and the risk to the mission of every single operation.

I would like to highlight that the U.S. Army and all of our joint operations in the United States, all of our special operations in the United States are inherently joint. But on the U.S. Army side, we have my hats off to John Braga and others that are leader of the Army Special Operations who have been thinking about the interoperability between soft and space and intel or cyber over the last several years and working very hard to integrate those. It appears that the Israeli forces did that very, very well.

And I know that we're talking about that in professional forums, but I do think that it is an absolute requirement as we look to the future and how we're going to be able to provide those offensive capabilities that will help us in our defensive posture and create deterrence looking forward. And I'll pause there, Riki, if you've got any questions.

[Mr. Riki Ellison]

Yeah, and Shachar talked about it, but the integration of the U.S. with Israel and they're sharing data and working together is second to no other nation. What's different? What's so special? We can't duplicate that. To other allies.

[Lieutenant General (Retired) Jamie Jarrard]

Yeah, I don't think we're prohibited. Yeah, well, I mean, I don't think we're prohibited from doing that. I think that the Israeli Defense Force and their special forces, along with their interagency teams of Mossad and others are extremely capable. And one of the reasons that we have such a close relationship, especially with the Special Operations community and them is because of their success over the years. They're not perfect. They've made some mistakes, but because of our capabilities and the activities that we've executed, there is a desire on behalf of both of our forces to learn from each other and to get better.

And I think because they have so much that we can learn from is one of the things that has drawn us to them over the years. Other countries potentially may not be at the same level of sophistication or have the experience that the Israeli forces have, which potentially is one of the reasons that it's kept us from doing that previously. But there's no reason we can't continue to share and learn from our key allies and partners. And I think we, for the most part, I think we do a pretty good job of that.

[Mr. Riki Ellison]

Jamie, as you said, how important the special forces aspect of this was, the offensive capability of missile defense. Do you see the U.S. expanding that role and coordinating, going back into our maneuver forces to have a prominent defensive offensive? We're not that way. We used to be that way. And we're doing missile defense separately on a separate basis and so forth. But is this a surge to bring the integration between defense and offense much bigger than it's ever been? In our military for probably 30, 40 years?

[Lieutenant General (Retired) Jamie Jarrard]

I think that we would, I think it would be a disservice to the United States people if we fail to learn everything that is able to be learned from Ukraine and Israel. And so if, and I think that's one of the things that we need to look, take a look at and make sure that we are integrating as closely as possible so that we have all the capabilities and we are providing our senior leaders with all of the options possible to achieve the political ends that they desire for us to achieve.

[Mr. Riki Ellison]

Thank you, thank you. Okay, John, you're clean up batter here and the hardest stuff you've got to talk about, I think is the policy part of it. But the great strategic lessons, policy lessons from what just happened.

[Mr. John Rood]

Well, thank you, Riki. And it's wonderful to be with so many distinguished people. You know, listening to Jamie reminds me the first time I met him as the back of a truck in Syria, in doing his, in uniform while he's doing his special operations duties that were so key to the defeat of ISIS. And he's done so many amazing things to make our SOF and our relationship with Israel so successful. So it's great to be with you again and to get to follow. And I was really impressed with Tal and Shachar's presentations.

So you've put together a great panel, Riki, at a very important time. So stepping back, I mean, as I look at this, first of all, the focus of today's session is on missile defense. It could very well be the regional alignment or what is emerging in the Middle East, but let's focus on missile defense here for today. And one of the things that I think bears, you know, underscoring several times is that we're watching a conflict in which missiles are the primary

instrument of warfare. We're watching that in Ukraine. We were watching that with the Houthis in the Red Sea.

We watched that with the Houthis fight the Saudis and the Emiratis and others. We watched that in other conflicts in Syria. But it's a very fundamental point that missiles and the nature of warfare have changed with missiles and drones and strikes becoming very central to the modern type of warfare. After all, the Iranians have spent decades investing in this missile force, as Shachar talked about, to become a regional superpower, if you will, with missile capabilities. By contrast, they have not invested that way in their air force. You know, as an example, the Israelis destroyed some F-14s on the ground. Those are some 50 years old.

There are other investments the Iranians have made in proxy forces and the ability to wage irregular warfare, if you will. But we have to learn those lessons. And it sounds self-evident that people will say, well, we in the United States are very focused on the missile threat. In fact, we're changing. I would say yes, to a certain degree. But as an example, during the four years of the previous administration, in real terms, the U.S. missile defense budget was reduced. Reduced, and after all, in our system, the president proposes, the Congress passes the authorities. When you keep the apples to apples comparison of U.S. missile defense systems and spending funded over that four year period, it declined. President Trump has proposed an increase the Golden Dome initiative is very welcome.

But at this stage in our system, these are strong steps being taken by the president, the administration, but they haven't been realized yet. And so when I say it's a very fundamental point, are we learning the lessons as Jamie talked about from Ukraine and Israel? I'd say it's very incomplete so far in the United States. I think our colleagues in Israel, our friends, have shorter cycle times by necessity. And this is one of the things that keeps their weapons sharp and their minds sharp, is the necessity of that. But we have to take that to heart and prioritize missile defenses.

And I think what you're seeing in the conflict is the definition of missile defense has always spanned the full spectrum from prior to launch to dealing with a missile in the air to, in fact, the home front. And there will be debris. No defense will be 100%. That's the nature of warfare and the history of humanity. Every invention has been followed up by some countermeasure by the adversary. So there's no perfect that can be achieved.

So you have to have the ability to remediate, to keep people safe in their homes, to deal with the impacts, to deal with, in some cases, special materials, special warheads being used. But missile defense, therefore, has to span that spectrum. And you're seeing the importance, as Jamie and Shachar highlighted, of special operations forces to thin that herd, to shape that fight, to, in some cases, as Tal discussed, the rate of fire declining from some 40 missiles per barrage to a handful or smaller numbers.

Or if you go back a little further to October or last June of 2024, Iran being able to mount several hundred missiles and drone attacks simultaneously in highly coordinated ways. Well, I think, as an observer, my guess is what's degraded. That is, one, the people. Remember, command and control begins with the people exercising command and control. The brilliance of the Israeli strikes in eliminating key leaders and disrupting the apparatus functioning of the Iranian government. And importantly, the forces executing, who are in command of individual units and disrupting deployment patterns and movements of the force.

And also, the Iranians being slower to adapt, if you will, to their cycle time to observe, orient, and make decisions and then act. So we have to look at missile defenses also as the stabilizing force that they are. There's still, unfortunately, in our country, in the United States, some hangover that some people still have this Cold War mentality that missile defenses, and I would say the last administration suffered from this, believing it's somehow destabilizing to mount a very large-scale effective defense against a country like China or Russia.

And I would argue the opposite is true. Weakness historically is provocative. Weakness makes it very difficult to maintain deterrence. And missile defenses, whether in the two strikes that Israel suffered, with hundreds of missiles being intercepted by Israeli forces with their American and allied counterparts, helped to restore deterrence. And that didn't mean the Israeli forces had to simply sit on their hands and not exercise offensive options. They wisely shaped the air defense environment by attriting it to pave the way for strikes like what we're seeing today.

In our policy, and some people often ask me when I led policy at the Pentagon, well, what is policy anyways? I would say policy in the U.S. military context is you have to understand the context in which you're operating. What are the threats? What are their intentions? What's the character of the military force that I need? What type of capabilities? Because you cannot prioritize, you cannot afford everything. You have to make hard choices about what you're doing and why you're doing it and where you're doing it. And there will always be losers in that debate.

So that's part of policy, weighting those things and prioritizing what is important. And missile defense has been under-prioritized. And I would say you're also then deciding what's the character of the application of military force? When do I do that and how do I do it? And towards what strategic objectives and tactical objectives? To a lesser extent, tactical. That's usually determined by the forces operating. But strategic objectives. And here, if you apply that lesson, you have to say, well, the context in which this is occurring, this didn't have conflict.

I get very frustrated when I read American news stories saying the conflict started seven days ago. And I think the conflict started decades ago. And in fact, one of the things that struck me in one of my trips to Israel in 2006, right after the 2006 Lebanon war, is the recognition by Israeli leaders that we are already at war with Iran. We just fought a major conflict in Lebanon. We understand, and visiting Mossad headquarters and other things, we understand we are already engaged in a war through proxy forces, through other activities. And we will someday face that war directly between our countries.

And they've spent decades, and we have worked hand in glove with our allies to create the capabilities that are being utilized today. These things don't happen quickly or even within months. They take years of intense work. And part of what keeps them sharp when you're asking Riki about why can we do this with Israel and we struggle sometimes with other allies, it's not in some cases a lack of will, but we exercise relentlessly. We plan relentlessly. And I will say our Israeli friends push us too.

Part of what keeps Israel a surviving nation is their military establishment has never lost the survival instinct. I'll give you one vignette when I worked at Lockheed Martin, we delivered the first F-35 in Israel's history, and I was in the Negev desert to await the arrival at a big ceremony. And there were delays due to weather and other things. And the plan the Israeli Air Force had is within the next morning after receiving our first aircraft, we will be training

and operating with it to send a message that we can never lose the survival instinct. We must do this. Would a day or two of planning or a week really have made a difference?

Maybe not. But it's the kind of thing that so impressed me about seeing the chief of the IAF just insisting to the prime minister and others, we must do this tonight. We must do this tomorrow because we can never lose our survival instinct. And that's what you're seeing play out so brilliantly in the execution. But when you go back to the policy considerations, recall capabilities and intentions are important. And an easy way to explain intentions is look, the Iranian regime has encouraged its people to chant for decades, death to Israel, death to America.

That's a pretty clear statement of intent, but they've also funded people that have been acting to kill hundreds of Americans over decades to kill Israelis and to execute through their proxies, wars. So that's part of the intent. If we were having this call 10 years ago, we would have been concerned about the expansionist Iranian regime having a crescent of influence and frankly being on the march all throughout Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Hamas and building up their proxies, the Houthis, and frankly being on the tide running in their favor.

And that has really been reversed in a remarkable way. The tide is now running in our favor, but the strategic objectives haven't yet been achieved despite the brilliance of the campaign that Iran has spent decades developing the means to produce a nuclear weapon. And I know we're limited on time, so I'll just do by shorthand. The limiting factor that has prevented dozens of countries around the world from achieving nuclear weapon status has typically been the material. And there are two routes to the material, plutonium route and a uranium route. The plutonium route, what's central to that is the Iraq heavy water reactor which the Israelis, as Tal mentioned, took out today.

If you break that chain, and the principal limiting factor is the ability to concentrate and have the material. The Iranians have spent decades developing the capability to enrich uranium to weapons grade. And the bulk of the work to go after 5% is done in the first 5% of concentrating an isotope of uranium-235.

There is no practical application, except for nuclear weapons, for highly enriched uranium, which the Iranians have developed. And civilian countries don't build, under hundreds of meters of concrete and under mountains, energy production. And civilized nations that don't intend to develop nuclear weapons don't conduct nuclear weaponization experiments at military sites, which is what the Iranians have been doing for a long period of time.

So, as much as their leadership and their sophisticated claims, "we don't have intentions for a nuclear weapon," actions speak otherwise. So, I think transitioning to in the policy considerations, we've got to restore deterrence, and deterrence is not like a chemical equation, or it's not permanent. Deterrence is, as Shachar was talking about, it's ever-changing, dynamic, and it has to constantly be attended to.

But I think there also has to be a capability outcome here, which Iran does not have the means to produce a nuclear weapon or the strategic objectives will not be fully fulfilled. And from watching from afar, I don't have any inside information. The Israelis seem to have some secondary objectives, beyond simply degrading the nuclear program, to destabilizing the regime, taking away long range, conventional missile strike capabilities, special operations forces, power projection capabilities in Iran, and so on.

Those are important, but to me, this is where the considerations of the United States and whether to join the conflict are that, can you truly prevent Iran from having a capability to produce a nuclear weapon? And then the other thing I think we've got to keep in mind is, we Americans tend to have a flaw that we think in terms of quickly solving problems such as a conflict like this. And the reality is in most history around the world, most conflicts are never "solved." They're just placed into a greater form of stability, meaning there isn't a hot war. They're not active.

I think it'd be unrealistic to think as long as this Iranian regime stays in power, they cease to be hostile to the United States or Israel. But it'll be a strategic victory if they don't have the ability to use long range missiles to deliver nuclear weapons to the state of Israel. Just think, if one of these missiles that had made it through was armed with a nuclear weapon, the type of scenario we would be talking about now and why I understand why the Israelis have taken this action at this time.

So that's probably a little more than you'd say. But the last thing I'd say that's critical for policy is deciding what kind of alliance relationship you want to have and with which people and when. And I just sum up by saying, you know, Israel has been a longstanding strategic partner and importantly, a friend, a close friend of the United States. And this is a difficult time. It's been a difficult time since the October Hamas attacks. But, you know, friendship matters very little if it's just done in times of convenience. And so now is a time when friendship needs to be reinforced because it's a time when it's hard. And that's when it really matters. So that's what I hope that my country continues to do. And thank you, Riki, for getting us together.

[Mr. Riki Ellison]

John, thank you. You know, our president loves Israel and loves the Iron Dome, which he's created in our country. And this just elevated that desire and determination to get that. But, the investment that we've given Israel to be able to strategically take out a nuclear state is in itself, in itself, worth the support to do something like that. When our policy, which our policy, I believe, we don't strike first. That's something that's deep in there.

But, when we're in a world that we are today where nuclear weapons is not deterring conventional capabilities, you're going to have to introduce an offensive strike capability with your defense. And I'm saying to you, John, the Iron Dome, they got it. They got it. But now, if the Golden Dome really should have some offensive capability in that, in that policy-wise and ability to do both when you build that? Is that real? Or is that--that's going to be pretty controversial.

And I would also say that, yes, the US is the number one country in the world that can strike. They can offensively do what Israel did better than anybody in the world. But we have no defensive capability, realistically, to handle a counterattack. And that's where the Golden Dome's going. And we're watching Israel as the example for our country to do this. But Israel is the size of New Jersey. This is a whole other dynamic. Just a few comments on that.

[Mr. John Rood]

Well, I'd say you're right, Riki, in the sense that the Golden Dome initiative is a very good one and very timely because as large scale as the missile war is right now with Iran, if we were engaged in a conflict, and we can't forget the United States with our global interests and responsibilities, if we were engaged in a missile conflict or just a conflict with China, this would be very, very small in comparison. It's not just the capability that you need to have as a

country like the United States or Israel, meaning your ability in a one-on-one engagement to deal with a threat, but mass matters, size matters, your ability to deal with things and with some staying power. We have a little bit of hangover that I observed as a civilian in the Defense Department in our uniformed military that because many of our conflicts have had short, high intensity outcomes, there is a bias towards thinking the duration of the conflict might be short and not thinking in terms of surviving through attrition and reconstitution of force and being able to fight through heavy attack in duress.

We've done that in our history in the United States, but more recently, we haven't had to. The other part is a belief in the capability of offensive forces to achieve their aims on their own. And I'd say I agree in the value of offenses, and offenses and preemption and use of special operations or cyber preemption and other things are very important, but it can't be a replacement for strong defenses.

There are limits to your ability to suppress the fire, and we're seeing it in real time. As brilliant as the Israeli Air Force has been in achieving air superiority and air dominance over Iran, the rate of missile fire has declined, but you're still seeing it. I'm a firm believer you cannot fully suppress the fire so long as you've got a determined enemy. So, you're going to have to have a capable defense. I dislike, for example, this phrase that was very prominent in the Pentagon. Well, let's shoot the archers instead of the arrows. Well, of course, but don't kid yourself. You're not going to eliminate all the archers. You are still going to need a shield to deal with the arrows coming at you.

That doesn't mean you don't aggressively target them, but it's a crutch to think you're simply going to do this with offense or, Israel has a better capability to deal with short range defenses like Iron Dome than the U.S. Army, because the U.S. Army has employed maneuver, the U.S. Army has employed other tactics to not have to deal with the threat. But there are limits to how much you can do that.

So, the other thing I think we haven't talked about where we're deficient is, Golden Dome will also add a layer of defense which we're weak in. You're seeing a layered defense with several different systems operate in Israel. The United States also has similar land and sea-based capabilities, but we've underutilized space, and the high ground of space, and the enabling of that and how rapidly you can detect, move information, generate fire control solutions, and conduct intercepts from space that really is lacking in the U.S. arsenal. So, I like what the president has done in the United States with respect to appointing a Space Force general who's brilliant, like Mike Goodline, to lead that effort.

But the other, having a layered defense is important, but you've also got to not take off the table offenses and your ability to have them be so closely synchronized and allied capabilities work together. And that is really, really hard work. But you're seeing how important it is and how many lives it's saving. Just imagine how this conflict would have been different. And that's what the Supreme Leader envisioned when he invested over decades to create those capabilities, is the ability to encircle Israel with a ring of fire, the axis of resistance on a multi-front war, to eliminate the state of Israel. And that he's frustrated in his ability to do that now.

[Mr. Riki Ellison]

Great, great point. All right, I know we're running a little over time. J.D., did you have any questions, real quick? We'll sum it up.

[Mr. J.D. Gainey]

Yep, so yeah, J.D. Gainey, off camera. So, this goes to our colleagues in Israel. I'm only going to do one question, even though we have a whole bunch submitted. This is, what you are enduring is something new with respect to United States defense enterprise. And that is sustained missile war or sustained missile defense designs.

Secretary Rood alluded to it. General Gerard alluded to it as well. When the United States plans for missile defeat, it does so in salvos, measured maybe in days. You are in a prolonged event. So, you have seen, based on the different threats, the different types of threats, the different capability mixes within those salvos and within those threats. The question is, what initial lessons learned have you seen about adaptability to changing tactics?

Because what you're doing is absolutely effective. Iran is not achieving the results or the objectives that they're trying to achieve because of your defense design. How are you able to address the change, assess the change, and implement the counters to that change? And if you can kind of talk through that, is it modeling a SIM? Is it software updates, et cetera? So if you can allude to that, that'd be great.

[Mr. Tal Inbar]

Shachar, it's you.

[Brigadier General (Retired) Shachar Shohat, IDF]

I'm not sure I understood, really, the question. So, if you can repeat back the final of the question.

[Mr. JD Gainey]

The question is, what are some initial lessons learned that the United States can take from your ability to assess the change in threats, the change in the implementation, and how those threats are being projected at you, and you're adapting to it and changing the way that you manage the change coming at you?

[Brigadier General (Retired) Shachar Shohat, IDF]

So, I believe we also learned it by ourselves from the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. I think one of the main lessons learned is how to protect the air defense. Because this is the very early beginning of the war, losing the radars of the air defense blind you, and giving the enemy the capability to gain the air superiority, and then to attack you very freely.

And I think we haven't done a good enough job during the conflict with the Hezbollah. I know that Riki was very kind of our elevated sensor, so we didn't protect our elevated sensor and we lost them in that conflict. And so, I think the necessity to defend the defender is one of the key issues.

And I think in this conflict now, in the last seven days, we are implementing very good. And I mentioned that we kept all the Israeli offense capability live and capable. And that gives us the leeway to work freely and also to reduce the necessity of the defense, because the offense is a very good one.

And maybe the second thing that I think we covered very deeply during this session, and I think Jamie referred it very well, that the ability to work together with your allies, the interoperability, not only between systems, but between people. And between people is mutual respect, is mutual commitment, is giving your ally the ability to do mistakes. And

even though they keep working together, shoulder to shoulder, and I think alliances is essential to the near future in the region and the entire world.

[Mr. Riki Ellison]

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much. Okay, we're just going to wrap it up real quick. Great discussion. Jamie, you want to go first?

[Lieutenant General (Retired) Jamie Jarrard]

Hey, thanks, Riki. I don't have anything to add. I was supposed to be in Israel this Saturday on a visit with JINSA supported, and unfortunately that got postponed. But I do look forward to when we do get there, and hopefully understanding deeper some of the insights and key lessons learned from our Israeli allies. Thank you. John?

[Mr. John Rood]

Well, I'll just say, it's been a great discussion, but the only closing point I'd make is, there is, while we focused on many of the military technical components of the conflict, we should never lose sight of the human dimension here and lose our humanity. The Israeli campaign is very justified because the Iranian regime seeks the destruction of the state of Israel, and also the means to do that, with things like nuclear weapons, which could destroy millions of people. But the humanity of this—there's still the cost being borne by the Israeli people. There's a cost being borne by the Iranian people. And there is the people dimension, and Shachar talked about this.

It's not just the technical connection and the interoperability. The human dimension that has been so important to create this and the mutual commitment and the hard work, and in some cases, personal sacrifice, or the personal sacrifice that forces are taking in the ground, whether they're the THAAD units in operation or Israeli Special Forces and Mossad operating inside Iran.

We should never lose sight of that human dimension. And it's a tragedy that this is required to have this type of conflict. And let's hope it's over and stability is restored and deterrence is restored before long. But let's also not lose sight of the importance of the human dimension and not focus just on technical dimensions in restoring deterrence and restoring stability and a more peaceful situation. So that's what I'd close with. Thank you, Riki.

[Mr. Riki Ellison]

Thank you, John. Tal?

[Mr. Tal Inbar]

Yeah, I just want to add something about the Golden Dome. So, one lesson is to see from the beginning of building the Golden Dome system, how to incorporate some of the space assets of this system in the future into theater defense, regional defense, like the problems we have here. And speaking about protecting our own assets, like Hezbollah took out a lot of radars, for example.

So, the Israeli Air Force took the chance and attacked yesterday, or the day before, a plant of ATGMs in Iran. So, this is, again, something against the proxies of Iran being attacked because we seized the opportunity to do so. And I think the most important, until now, the lesson is to try to keep the conflict very short, as short as possible, not only because, like John Rood said, the human cost and the Shachar, you know, about the number of interceptors and so on, it's not infinite.

But we don't want to drag this situation into a war of attrition, but now we've missed out. So, this is something that we have to understand and try to contain this war and to make it as short as possible.

[Mr. Riki Ellison]
Shachar, you're up.

[Brigadier General (Retired) Shachar Shohat, IDF]
I just want to thank Jamie and John for the words. It's you guys that are making the world safer. And thank you for all you've done and said. And to you, Riki, thank you for letting me in.

[Mr. Riki Ellison]
Thank you, Shachar. Thank you, everyone. Thank you, both of you that are up late at night in Israel tonight, sustaining the strikes that you talked about and leading your country to safety. Israel is the best that's out there right now in the world on a layered defensive capability and the tactics that they're using is unbelievable. And you're valued. You're valued.

And anybody that says we shouldn't be supporting Israel is wrong in the missile defense capabilities that we are working with you on. And we're going to have to be together for the whole thing, for crises that are going to happen in Europe, in CENTCOM, in Asia. Your friendship, your partnership, your trust, your ability to work with us to be able to defeat and win because you want it. That is the cornerstone.

And I think from all the investment that we've ever given your country to do what you're doing now and continue to go with us. So, thank you for the time and the opportunity to hear your perspectives. Everybody here was a great discussion. So, thank you very much for being part of it. Thank you.”