

Virtual CRT “Who You Gonna Call?”

[Riki Ellison]

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to another stunning spring day here in Washington, D.C. in Alexandria, Virginia. I've just come from the Pentagon this morning, meeting with A&S, and I just got back from a tour in the Middle East of our forward operating bases.

I'm Riki Ellison. I'm the founder and chairman of the Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance, an alliance that's been built 20 years ago, and I have been involved with it for 40 years. Our sole mission is to make our nation and this world a safer place through the advocacy, deployment, and evolution of missile defense.

An organization, and the members that are going to speak today to you or with you are all on the same mission. We're not a think tank. We're not policy thinkers, and we're a do tank, and we advocate for the warfighter, and no time ever in the history of missile defense is a time now that we have seen Iran exploit our gaps in this mission set, and it is humbling to see a great country like us not have those gaps resourced.

The culture and the process, those three fundamental things have to change for this mission set. This is our 98th congressional roundtable. It is who you're going to call, and we have exceptional warfighters and policy fighters.

All of them are on the MDAA board, and they will be contributing to this discussion and advancing this discussion to educate, illuminate, and move forward with this. The facts are out there. You can look at Wall Street Journal, and you can look at videos, internet.

Our bases in the Middle East have been hit. They have been hit by drones. They have been hit by cruise missiles.

They have been hit by ballistic missiles, and they have been hit by bombs. It has cost our country American blood. It has cost our country billions of dollars in radars, batteries, planes, and infrastructure.

Facts are the facts. We simply do not have the capacity, the capability, or the manpower to defend all of our bases in the Middle East. There are two solutions that we have to discuss, or we will try to discuss.

One, obviously, is the crisis of how we can do something now in the next few months or a few weeks to resolve this as much as we can. And then the bigger discussion on what is the strategic solution for base defense, for our country's defense, against the multitude of these threats that we are seeing from Iran. But certainly, we have all watched for three years, every day, of what Russia has done to Ukraine.

We are no longer able to defend our bases from within our bases. That is a losing strategy. The evolution of this fight is what we watched in Ukraine.

You have to be outside the fence line. You have to be forward with capability and capacity, both to sense and both to take out. We have to be able to fight with our partners, with our allies, with our countries, and share C2.

We have to have open C2 architecture to bring those assets in. We don't do that. These are revolutionary changes that have to happen.

I'm going back now, because who are you going to call three years ago? Three years ago, right after the Ukraine war started in December, after that, a group of Ukrainians came to me with innovation to deal with the drone and ballistic missile and cruise missile threat. They created innovation that nobody's ever seen before in terms of a cheap acoustic sensor, \$600, and mobile fire trucks with machine guns and auto guns, but most importantly, a sky map and integration C2, where they're bringing dirty data in to make it all together so they can be efficient with their shooting and being able to adapt it.

It was phenomenal. It's been the baseline of them being able to defeat what we've seen Iran has done much greater than that with that. With that new innovation, I took the liberty as an advocate for what my mission said and brought it.

I brought it to EUCOM. I brought it to USAFE. I brought it to Glen when he was NORTHCOM Combatant Commander.

I brought it to R&E. I brought it to SMDC. I brought it to A&S.

I brought it to the biggest defense missile defense contractor in the world. I got it tested. They tested it in all of our bases, in Indo-PACOM, across our country, and in Europe, and then with Tom Browning of R&E.

Then we got ghosted. It wasn't made in the United States. We've got our pet projects.

It's like John Boyd with the F-16 back in the day. They didn't accept it, and they killed it. They put it in the Valley of Death where processes and risk adversity happens.

They didn't address it. Every day, Shahed drones, cruise missiles, and Russian ballistic missiles were attacking, and the Ukrainians were defeating these. With Epic Fury, they got hit.

Who did they call? They went to their embedded folks in Ukraine, EUCOM, and US Army, 52nd & 10th AMDC, that are actually doing this. They brought them into the theater, and they are chasing the exact same systems that we advocated for three years ago.

It's embarrassing, but we have to get a hold of this because it's just going to get much bigger than what we're seeing today. It's like the IED problem, but it's not an MRAP. You're not going to get a silver bullet solution for this.

You're going to have to get layers of capability out there, cheap mass, and you're going to have to integrate it into your exotic capabilities that are there. I'm so glad that my board and I have the courage to address this. This has to be addressed.

We really haven't addressed it, so I look forward to this discussion. I'd like to show, just to start this off before we get engaged with our discussion, all of them, John Rood, Glen VanHerck, Jamie Jarrard, and Ty Thomas. I have a video that I'd just like to show.

It's an open video. You'll see really what the status is of what's going on. Curtis, could you play the video?

Three, two, one. Great job. That was awesome, man.

Uncontested and unacceptable. I'm going to start it off. John Rood, former OSD Undersecretary for Policy under President Trump's first term.

John, your thoughts.

[John Rood]

Well, Ricky, the ability for the Iranians to strike American forces so regularly and without the kind of defenses that we need our soldiers, sailors, and airmen to be equipped with, it is really just deeply troubling to watch. Right now, what we're seeing the Iranians be able to do is, first of all, they're adaptive. They're learning.

They are assessing, with help from places like Russia and China and elsewhere, our defense systems. They're showing the ability to impose costs on U.S. forces in the region. We've known for quite some time that we had a shortage of the kind of capabilities needed to counter these sorts of drones and low-altitude attack systems.

We've also known that we've had insufficient quantities of missile defense interceptors and insufficient capabilities. But here, we've just seen now that the old maxim that if you're unprepared for war, the bill is paid in lives, and it is paid in blood and in our forces, our equipment. We are seeing that.

It's on paper a lopsided conflict. However, when you really get down to watching the conflict endure and continue, you are seeing these sorts of things that are, frankly, simply unacceptable. The warning signs have been there.

The danger has been looming. A lot of people, myself included, have pointed to that looming threat. But we've just, as a U.S. military system, not been able to coalesce and act. I mean, it's one thing to talk about things, but the ability to act at the speed of relevance has been missing here. And you highlighted a lot of the reasons. But it's just deeply troubling to watch and see unopposed attacks on U.S. forces who lack the capability to respond, in some cases. But let me just step back. I mean, the conflict with Iran, while President Trump and the Israeli prime minister had the opportunity to take the initiative and chose the time and place of the U.S. and Israel starting the conflict, the response of the adversary, in this case the Iranians and their allies in places like Moscow and in China and North Korea, is really been very expected. The sorts of things that I can say from my time as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy that we anticipated, that we expected, had information that the Iranians would employ in response, we're seeing them do.

I think the conflict is playing out along lines that many of us thought would be very familiar, unfortunately. And so, the first signs of these capabilities being merged, and remember,

there's an axis that works together. It's not just the Iranians and their proxy forces in places like Iraq and elsewhere who are adapting and learning, or whether it's the Houthis, they're sharing this information.

They've enabled, the Iranians have enabled these capabilities in these various forces around the region. And so, they're seeing our defenses, but they're also provided great support from places like Russia and China and North Korea, who obviously spend every day planning for our forces. So, at a policy level, one of the things that you try to do is assess what are U.S. objectives in the area, and then, or around the world, globally. What is the role of the military? And then, what's the character of the force that we need to respond? And we've been out of balance as a force for quite some time.

People just not kind of accepting the fact that the nature of warfare continues to shift rather dramatically, and that unmanned systems, whether they're UAS or on the surface or subsurface, have become very cheap and easy to do. Furthermore, we live in the missile age, the missile and drone age. The Iranians, for the last 30 years, have not been building a manned air force to counter the United States.

They, like North Korea, like China, like Russia, have featured things like missiles, drones, because this is a cheap and effective way to strike targets, to produce and replenish your arsenal. Sometimes people forget the most expensive thing in the U.S. arsenal for things like the Air Force, the Navy, Marine Corps, is manned aviation, because the cost, including the Army, the cost of maintaining manned aviation is very high. And we, in the U.S. forces, and to a certain extent, the Israeli forces, suffer from a bias that we were the best in the world at manned aviation. So, we rely very heavily on these capabilities. In my time as Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, we fought a battle, for instance, to leave the INF Treaty to allow the United States to employ these kinds of missiles of our own, in our own inventory, because we were in a treaty that prohibited that. And the other side, the Russians, were not adhering to it.

So, there was really a one-way limitation. But that was a surprisingly controversial, you know, fight that we eventually won to exit that treaty to allow the United States to embrace some of these capabilities that the Iranians and others are employing so much. But the warning signs have been there, really, at least since 2019.

We saw, originally, Iranian proxies or other forces like ISIS begin to employ drones, at that time, against Russian forces in Syria, and the Russians being savaged by these air attacks, losses to combat aviation, losses to their troops on the ground. And it really was a warning sign. And so, I recall, along with others, really trying to sound that alarm bell that those attacks are coming for us.

CENTCOM and our forces were spread throughout the region and still are to a certain extent. And there was a limited response with a joint counter UAS force stood up with then Major General Sean Gainey at the helm. But the Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and others at the time, I think, underplayed the threat.

I think some of us, myself included, really wanted something much more substantial to be stood up than to give the Army an additional mission for air defense. So, the character of the force, how much money you're allocating, we saw declines in the allocation for funding

for missile defense, for an example, over some periods in the last few years by the United States. You know, at a time where it was obvious when you watch the conflict in Ukraine evolve that we live in the missile age, missiles and drones are a primary method of warfare, not an additional one, a primary method of warfare.

And we just have not taken to heart the nature of that shift in conflict. And you're observing in Ukraine, the persistence and the number of the volume of drones being there to really limit maneuver, limit the ability for forces to adjust on the battlefield, and really imposing dramatic costs on those forces. You know, I recall, and there's been a hangover in some of our services.

I recall having this debate with the then Chief of Staff of the Army who said, John, do you realize how long it's been since an American soldier has been bombed from the air? I'll answer the question. He said, it's World War II.

Our Air Force can maintain control of the skies. We don't need to invest the level you're talking about in ground-based air defense. We've just had a level of unwillingness to accept the threat, but it's here and now, and it's making the ability to use multi-billion dollar assets.

We're seeing losses in our missile defense radars, in our combat aircraft, in our power projection aircraft. And it's not been a stupid enemy. Again, they've been assisted by others.

You can't rely on your adversaries to fumble the ball, if you will. So at a policy level, we have to adjust where we're spending money, the prioritization, and we also need to get our roles and responsibilities right. You recall this group, the Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance published a paper saying our defense, our air bases, our forward power projection bases are heavily at risk, and the U.S. Army is incapable of devoting the funds necessary for that. And the U.S. Air Force should be given a role and mission to be able to defend those things. That came rather late, some of these authorities. And we need to create the right structures within our defense department to develop the kind of capabilities to counter those.

And historically, that's typically been done not by either giving a lead service an outsized responsibility, or creating a joint organization is truly empowered, such as the early days, the Missile Defense Agency that three years after its creation, you saw the deployment of the U.S. Missile Defense System to protect the United States for the very first time at blinding speed at the time. But you have to empower those organizations to operate separately, and not in accordance simply with a traditional DoD 5000 acquisition system. You have to empower officials to make decisions, to make trades.

There's a lot of discussion about that, but we're not yet seeing that in operation. The combatant commands and others can hustle to develop things on their own, and to work with other co-coms and to have rapid capabilities. But in our system, they're operators, they're not going to be the developers of new technologies.

They're not technology experts, they're war fighters. And we want them focused there. For urgency, you can empower them, meaning say the next 30 days, 90 days, 120 days.

And there can be task forces and other things done. And that should be done in this conflict. But ultimately, we're going to have to see some organizational capability, like the new acquisition structures, the wartime acquisition.

We are in a war that the current administration has discussed, but we're not seeing it yet at the kind of level and scale of urgency that's required. And this is not a solution that is easily done, where you can, quote, get it right, there's not going to be a single system. We also have to have a policy that embraces allies into that system, because we can't do the defense simply by ourselves.

We've had policies encouraging open architecture and the ability to plug and play, but mostly for US-only assets. And we have to, this is not a simple solution, where you simply change a few settings on your computer, if you will, and now you can accept that data. Very hard technical work to produce open architecture systems, and we're going to have to have a layered defense with allies to do this effectively.

And we've been a little slow with the Allies around the world. I think there was a lack of understanding that the US has not traditionally fought by ourselves. One of our core strengths has been coalitions.

And here with the US out front and then challenging publicly, Allies to come along or participate after the conflict has begun, you know, typically they'll tell you, look, if you want me there at the landing, you're going to have to have me there at the takeoff. And there has to be some willingness to incorporate them into the war aims and into the broad effort and coalition building, which I think has been pretty ineffective thus far, because it's after the fact. It's not something that was prioritized up front.

So I think there's a policy issue there with respect to the importance of Allies and friends, the importance of architecting that in, the prioritization is the threat, and then structuring your acquisition system such that you can respond at the speed of relevance. But that's just a few thoughts to start with, Ricky. I know there's a lot of people.

[Riki Ellison]

I appreciate that aspect of it. And certainly at the end of this conversation, we'd like to have your clear policy solutions, clear crisp at the end of this to move forward on it. I would say to you on one comment of pulling the operators are going ahead without acquisition.

And that's not the right solution, but it's not the right solution either to have no operators in the acquisition process, because they're creating stuff that is not going to work in the field. That's what's happened as well in that culture. It's extremely frustrating.

You and I have been part of that for 20 years of people not wanting to do missile defense for all sorts of reasons, but mostly I think for the cost of it. But those days have got to be over now and we'll move on. Anything else you would like to say before I move it over to Ty?

[John Rood]

The only thing I'd say is some of those opponents of missile defense and due to the cost have said, it's much cheaper with offense to quote, shoot the archers and not the arrows. And we've just not been willing to learn the lessons and watching for example, the 2006

war, the Israelis fought against the Iranian proxies or what has gone on in the Russia, Ukraine conflict or others. You simply cannot sufficiently suppress the offensive fire through offenses.

That doesn't mean offenses are not good or counterforce, but to rely upon that in the missile and drone age is a fool's errand. We have poured enormous resources into the air combat to suppress the Iranian forces and yet the rate of fire continues, albeit at a diminished rate. The Iranians retain substantial capabilities, perhaps half or 60% of their missile force after enduring a tremendous onslaught.

You have to have both offenses and defense and they have to be integrated. And it's one of the things, just it's been a hard lesson for our folks to learn, but I'll stop there.

[Riki Ellison]

Thank you. Okay. We have a war fighter.

I want to push it over to the air force because these air force bases are one of the key factors in this game. The air force has somewhat been verbally given permission or oversight over the army on the AADC. So we have retired Lieutenant General Ty Thomas join us.

Ty?

[Jon Thomas]

Okay, great. Thanks. Good morning, Ricky.

Great to be part of this panel again. Great point there at the end, particularly John. I'll actually come back and hit on that as a wrap up my comments.

I mean, both you and John, Ricky, I think covered some of the facts specifically. I'll just run through it real quickly though, because I think it's particularly important, even the sequence. So one, you know, particularly for a circumstance in Saudi Arabia, but broader across the theater where we've taken some hits.

Okay. The threat existed. We knew that.

We're talking specifically about low, slow threats, loitering munitions, Shaheed 136 variants, things like that. We knew that those were coming. Second, Agile Combat Employment, ACE, exists.

It's not a theory. It's not a concept. It's in practice.

It's in practice in the Indo-Pacific. You know, I understood it to be in practice inside Air Force Central and in US Air Forces in Europe. Whether it was actually put into practice at the present time, it's a question that is probably reasonably asked.

I don't know we have all the answers, but ACE exists. Third, Active Defenses. To John's point, they exist and they're proven, and we've seen them in action in Ukraine.

Nonetheless, fourth fact is that we lost an entire E3 and may have lost several KC-135s, but they're certainly significantly damaged. All those aircraft taken off the battlefield in one strike in Saudi Arabia, Prince Sultan Air Base. That's all open source.

Those are the facts. So then you just ask yourself, well, how did we get here? Because it just cost us a lot of human blood and capability to now be driven to a conversation we've been trying to have for a while.

Well, from the service perspective, you might go, well, I'm the Air Force. That's not my job. That's the Army's job.

In the roles and missions inside the department, they're supposed to provide area defense as well as point defense. Okay. Well, then John mentioned history of MDAA, and there was actually some action taken.

And the Air Force, and General VanHerck may remember this, was given the lead for cruise missile defense, at least for the planning and some capability development. And I think it was 2022, maybe it was 2023. I had a conversation with a very senior Air Force leader about that and what the Air Force was doing.

And the answer I got was, Ty, we got a lot of authorities, we didn't get any funding associated with it. And the result of that, having that authority, was not a whole lot in terms of Air Force involvement in the full spectrum of things required to do cruise missile defense. Of course, there's some capabilities that the Air Force has, especially for air-to-air interceptor cruise missiles, but there's a lot more, as we've and we'll talk about, that could be done in that mission set.

So if your answer is, well, it's not our job, well, then actually you have the authorities, and then, well, we don't have enough money. Well, okay. So maybe in 2022 and 2023, I would agree with that statement, but we've now had a 26 budget with very large reconciliation funding, that is good for five years.

We have a FY27 budget right now that is gusting to 1.35 trillion. And some of that is reconciliation, some of it's base. And if we can't find the funds in there to do something that is an absolutely needed warfighting capability, we got to check our motivation.

And the motivation is burning airplanes that are sitting on the ground in a combat zone. So then if you go, well, we actually have the money, but we don't have the authorities, you know what? I think we just need to do what's necessary.

And to the point of combatant commanders versus services, the key difference is programs of record. If you want to have something institutionalized and stay around and have the training tail behind it, and all the things that are necessary to make something real for an extended period of time, the service has got to take it on. And so in the past, an Air Force answer, which might have like, you know what, the Army is supposed to do that, but they're not doing enough of it.

And we can complain and say, they're focusing on their forces and their maneuver forces. The Army is doing what they need to do. The Army does have a joint responsibility.

If they don't do enough, then what? Do we just sit back and go, well, the answer for sitting back and going, looks like what happened a few weeks ago. So I don't think as airmen, we need, we should be sitting back just going, and so all of the things that are available, and I'll get to the, I'll wrap up with John's point about, you have to be able to do both.

I mean, basic 101 of integrated air missile defense, there's four pillars, right? Okay. There's passive, there's active, there's offensive ops, and all that is underpinned by a C2 structure that senses and then shares understanding and allows effectors and passive defenses to be able to do their job.

We have to have all of that. Some of that, the Air Force is pretty good at when you use it, agile combat employment, C2 systems. We don't have much active defense, and you could go, well, how much is the Army supposed to have?

How much, just get some, especially for point defensive airfields and maybe a certain perimeter out further, and then maybe the rest of it becomes area level, and that is truly an Army Corps mission for the area level. But there are some gaps that we need to do something about, and we should pursue the authorities, but in the meantime, we have the resources, and we need to go after it so that we don't have this happen elsewhere. So let's just think about the first and second island chain and the risks that they're at in the Indo-Pacific.

This is going to be a threat, and we, especially after the experience of the last few weeks, can't go into a big fight in the Indo-Pacific not ready for this because it's coming. The commanders have to have the tools, the resources, the authorities to be able to defend their bases, defend their airmen, continue operations under attack. That's just so critical.

We have an opportunity to do something about it now. So that's it. I'll pause there.

Take any questions you got, Riki, and hand it back to the other guys.

[Riki Ellison]

Hi. I'd like you to postulate what happened because I think the success we had on the strike in Iran prior with the B-2 bombers and Israel, we saw the response back to Israel, which may have given us comfort that we could handle that. Why would you not play that to defend or have your bases defended for your production of air power in the Middle East?

Was that a gamble, a risk, or was it a calculated risk? How does that happen?

[Jon Thomas]

Riki, I can't speak to exactly the decisions and choices made by the commanders in the theater. I mean, you're right. In terms of Midnight Hammer and the Iranian response to that, it was muted for sure.

That was a different kind of attack than the whooping, the absolutely butt whooping that we've laid on them over the past few months. So it's likely to induce a different reaction. And so they came after us in a meaningful way, and we had forces within range of some of what you might call our lesser capable systems.

Well, the effects are the same, okay, burning airplanes and killed and wounded airmen, soldiers, sailors, and Marines. So did we maybe lay out our force posture in a more traditional way, in a threat environment, in an environment where maybe there was less of that kind of threat? There's some indications that it kind of looks like how we laid things down there in the theater for the past 20 years.

But I don't know all those facts. One thing's for sure, we should be carefully considering the volume of airfields that we might want to be operating out of, and dispersing and distributing some forces so that there's less concentration at some of the basics of passive defense and agile combat employment. And if we're not doing it, I think we need to be doing some of that.

[Riki Ellison]

From your perspective, because there's so many bases, I mean, there are Army and Navy bases, should the service that owns the base be responsible for manning and equipping this capability and capacity?

[Jon Thomas]

Do you mean when you say, do you mean like point defense of certain areas? Is that what you mean?

[Riki Ellison]

Base defense.

[Jon Thomas]

I think to a certain extent, you have to. I mean, that's who's going to be most motivated about defense of any particular point that you're talking about. I think that you need to be careful on what is the line, how far out do you go?

You need to figure that out. But it's a mix of capabilities. I don't know whether it was you or John that said the only way to do air and missile defense is layered.

So you got to just have layers. And some might be responsible for the inner layer, some might be responsible for the medium and outer layer. And there's all the other things that I mentioned about IMD.

[Riki Ellison]

But the tie, the reality is, is that our first layer is F-16s and F-35s air to air missiles. That's crazy expensive, limited. And then we have the Coyote at the back end of it.

It's not right. The whole layer, you don't do it this way. But we've been forced to do it this way, I believe, because we don't have any other way.

[Jon Thomas]

I think everybody understands that using AIM-9Xs and AMRAAMs to take down low-cost cruise missiles is a really bad, you know, long term proposition, full agreement there. How we got here, Ricky, is I think a combination of maybe being on autopilot and just thinking things are going to be okay, like they were in the past, and also some conscious decisions to like let others, you know, hey, you've got the mission, so you're supposed to do it. And if you're not doing it, I'm just going to sit here.

That's just got to change.

[Riki Ellison]

Do you think it will change now? Do you think this is a strong enough message that they're going to change it?

[Jon Thomas]

What more is it taking? Six burning airplanes at Prince Sultan Air Base, it's got to, I've got to trust that that's going to be motivational enough. They're good airmen that are responsible for these type of missions.

They just maybe need some additional, you know, motivation.

[Riki Ellison]

Hey, thank you, Ty, for that, for that perspective that you brought us. Now we're going to go over to the Army. We're going to go over a little bit of Special Forces because I think they've been very innovative and quick to adapt in situations like we're seeing today.

The Army has the mission, it's struggled with FPIC, it's struggled with IBCS, it's struggled getting capability, and it's been paid quite a lot. That's a lot of investment over the last 20 years or 10 years on air defense capabilities, but it wasn't there. It wasn't on our bases operating.

So there is culture here, there is process here, and there's an Army perspective because you can't expect the Army to man and equip every single base with Patriot batteries, THAAD batteries. It's too much. They can't do that.

So it has to be addressed, and I just want to get a good perspective. That's why we got Jamie here, Lieutenant General, retired former DEPCOMCDR for Pacific Army out there, but he's a little badass. Jamie, you're up.

[Jamie Jarrard]

Hey, thanks, Ricky. Just a couple of things up front. First of all, you mentioned the THAAD batteries, Patriot batteries.

I do want to give kudos to the soldiers that are operating those systems around the world because there's some phenomenal experts, and they are absolutely overworked and underpaid over the last decade or so. One of the most deployed high op tempo organizations in the Army, and they've done tremendous work everywhere they've been employed. So, this is by no means a discussion about their inability to do exactly what we've trained them and organized them to do.

For what they are supposed to do, they've done a very, very good job. But also, as I sit here and listen to my esteemed colleagues here on this virtual, I do think this is a little bit different. I've been a part of these before.

You've done many of them. You've said this is the 98th. But I do feel a sense of significance about the discussion we're having this morning that may not have been present in previous ones.

And it goes to your point. We've had service members killed in combat because they didn't have the appropriate capabilities to protect themselves. And if that's not a clarion call to the leadership, whether it's policy, whether it's the Congress, the folks that provide the budget, and for the service leadership to get this wrong righted very quickly, then we are at a very bad place in our history.

And I just want to start off again real quick with a profession. A profession is a self-regulating vocation of experts who apply specialized knowledge and judgment, adhere to an ethical code, and serve a vital societal need based on the trust of the society they serve. Society grants the profession discretion to regulate their standards and certify their members and enforce discipline.

And they also give it trust. And that public trust is foundational. The profession's authority depends on sustained confidence in its competence and character.

And the Army and its doctrine speaks to the profession. The Army profession is a unique vocation of experts certified in the ethical application of land power, serving under civilian authority and entrusted to defend the nation, the Constitution, and the American people. And so my question today, as I'm specifically talking about the Army, is the United States Army, and we can include the rest of the Joint Force, violating their professional obligations and eroding the trust of the American citizens that depend on their competence, and specifically in regards to the Army warfighting function of protection.

And I think there's a case to be made that they probably are. I also want to say it's easy to sit here and look in hindsight and say, hey, you should have, would have, could have. But I'm by no means arguing that their senior Army leaders have made nefarious, deliberate decisions.

And I'm also saying, you know, I've only been retired for 15 months. I'm part of this problem as much as anybody else. But we are at the risk of violating the responsibilities of a profession in arms and eroding the trust of the citizens of our great nation.

And we need to take corrective action as quickly as possible. And we, the big, the criminal piece of this is that we have failed to act with the appropriate information. We've had the information, you alluded to it earlier, we have had information that we could have made decisions that would potentially have prevented the loss of soldier lives.

And yet we failed to take action. Your protection is an Army warfighting function. It's the preservation of the effectiveness and survivability of mission-related military personnel, equipment, facilities, information, and infrastructure.

And a quick history, over the last 20, 26 years, the Army robbed Peter to pay Paul with respect to air defense expertise and capabilities. Once we got spun up after 9-11 for a counterinsurgency, air defense was not a priority formation or capability within the United States Army. And, and so, and John talked about that earlier.

And so we tactically and operationally, that was not a bad decision, but strategically, what we failed to do was continue to focus on that specific warfighting function to the degree that the nature of war was changing around the world. And we saw it, whether we wanted

to see it or not, in Israel, and especially over the last six or seven years in Ukraine. And so we failed to react as quickly as we should have with respect to capabilities and the institutional expertise within the Army to make sure that we were always prepared for whatever our nation asked us to do.

You know, there was a highlight here several years ago, you know, within the last decade, the Army created multi-domain task forces (MDTFs). And inside those formations, one of the highlights was the creation of long-range fires capability. And in a very short period of time, we were able to develop operationally test and field capability in the long-range fires arena into the Pacific.

And that was phenomenal, phenomenal. However, what we have failed to do was do the same with respect to protection. And Ricky, you've already mentioned them.

IFPC, the indirect fire protection capability, IBCS, we spent millions and maybe billions of dollars trying to develop some of these capabilities. Where were they on the battlefield in the Middle East? Where was IBCS?

Where was IFPC? And the answer was they weren't anywhere where they needed to be. Those capabilities are not to the place where they're tested and operationally validated.

And so we are absolutely guilty when we have failed to adapt to the nature of war as quickly as we should have. And especially as you highlighted three years ago, you showed the capability. And Iran, I'll talk briefly about Iran.

You know, the threat that we are engaged with now has been around for decades. And while several administrations, numerous administrations have failed to act decisively against the threat that Iran has become, I think it would be an error to say that any experienced military professional knew that at some point, at some point in the future, we were going to have to militarily prevent Iran from gaining a nuclear weapon. And so, if that is true, and I believe it is, then we knew we were going to have to face their threats.

And the Iranian threats have been evolving as others have dictated, but we've seen it on the field in Ukraine. We knew that Iran was giving Russians the Shaheed missile or drone technology. We knew that Russia was adapting that and sharing those lessons learned with Iran.

And so, we knew we were going to have to face those threats. And as recent as a little over a year ago, when we had the deaths at Entente garrison, and we failed to provide the appropriate protection for that facility. You know, we've been arrogant, we've been unwilling to reprioritize and make budgetary decisions.

There's been a lack of at the policy level, as John alluded to, in roles, admissions, clarity. And so, all of these that we have led us to where we are today. And so, we've got to take actions very quickly.

And I'll just finish with, you know, we've been talking about the nature of war, but only within the last week, Russia threw at Ukraine, you know, the third highest level of drones and missiles and with a new technique where they're shooting cruise missiles and

overwhelming them and they're coming back with very quickly with ballistic missiles. So that's the threat. You know, Ukraine is adapting as, you know, I think I read yesterday where they just now fired a counter-UAS capability off an unmanned vessel.

We're the United States of America, we should be leading in these areas. And yet we're watching Ukraine do it better than us. And that's, that's unacceptable.

And we got to change it off. I'll pause there, Ricky.

[Riki Ellison]

Jamie, that was a great explanation. Thank you for the courage to say that. I do want you to focus, I think, on the two biggest changes that have to happen, culture and process, and the branches.

And there is movement to get that culture and process correct. And to bring fighters, offensive and defensive fighters together instead of doing this separate, which doesn't seem to be working very well at all. And to look at that automated command capability, then you're going to have to take on China, Russia with tens of thousands of these things.

Is the Army, is that the right way to go for the Army is to dissolve the ADA branch and bring it into a new fires branch that does offensive and defensive and drone capability to do this? Or, we want to stay the same way we're doing? Is this a culture break for the U.S. Army on missile defense?

[Jamie Jarrard]

Yeah, Ricky, I think we absolutely need to break glass and change. I do not think that our historical organizations are going to be able to respond rapidly enough to future threats. And we're not just talking about the threats we see today.

The amazing thing about the threats around the world, but specifically within Ukraine, is the rapid changes that are taking place on the battlefield that require innovation every single day to remain abreast of those changes. And so, I absolutely think we need to break glass. I think we need to change the organizational structures in the Army to better facilitate innovation, and discipline initiative to counter those threats.

You know, you've spent a lot of time with General Chris Donahue, C.D. over in Europe. I think that's where C.D. thinks we need to go. And I am supportive of anything we need to do that will help us be better prepared for the future.

[Riki Ellison]

Thank you. I just want to put that back out to everybody. The innovation, our requirements cycle to make change of force is full of processes that take time, six months, a year, two years.

The threat is moving so fast that you can't do what we've been doing in that process. We have to be able to change that process to be able to adapt. Very, very focused on innovation and getting out of bringing in who does that best, the civilian world.

We've got to bring that in together to make this fight the best we can on doing that. So, Jamie, I'm 100% with you. I think there is a discussion, and I think Raising Cane is thinking

about it, of a new command that could do this and acquire that kind of capability and capacity.

Because I don't know if you can do it any other way. I mean, we don't have enough manpower or capability and capacity to do everything, let alone our whole damn borders and our everything. I mean, we're at a flex point now, and this is going to change.

It has to change. Thank you. We've got a great honor now.

Glen, you can go over the time because of your expertise and having a COCOM commander with us that was in charge of the defense of our homeland against these types of threats. Just a great honor, and an airman, and part of the Air Force culture at the top lead to have our four-star COCOM good friend, General Glen VanHerck. Glenn?

[Glen VanHerck]

Hey, thanks, Ricky. I'll just go back to your last comment about the department and our ability to scale out in a timely manner. Fundamentally, the threat is able to operate within our acquisition cycles right now, and that demands change.

And we may have to accept some risk there, but fundamentally, I couldn't agree more with you. You know, success breeds complacency, and we've been very successful for decades at defending our forces that have led to a culture in our joint force, a culture across Congress, a culture within our civilian leadership, to fundamentally think that we're Fortress America, we're going to roll in, fundamentally, we'll be safe. Couple that with, you know, a battle space in the Middle East that was really set up to fight counterterrorism, counter-proxy activities, not a regional conflict against a major power in the region.

And so, I have to ask, did we accept risk we didn't need to accept rolling in on infrastructure that wasn't set up to fight a fight the way we're fighting with the threats that we have? So, we should ask ourselves that. Let's talk real quick about policy.

You know, in my time, and I spent the last seven years of my time in the Joint world on the Joint Staff, and then as a combatant commander, and I watched the discussion often times about what service should own air-based defense, if you will, not an air-based defense, but base defense largely. And that agreement was never reached. Fundamentally, the Air Force had one position, the Army had another.

And we agreed to disagree. That's a failure when we can't put policy in place and pin the tail on somebody to take ownership. And primarily what we're talking about is two separate things.

One is the acquisition of capabilities to conduct the mission. And those capabilities have to fundamentally be able to roll in and be commanded and controlled by a combatant commander, whether that's forward or at home, and logistically supported by the mechanisms that we have out there today to do that. And then the second one operationally, who is going to operate, command and control, make the decision?

Who are the trigger pullers that are trained, equipped to do that, to roll into that combatant commander? Those decisions were never made, and they don't have to be a single service.

It could be multi-type organizations like an MDA that rolls into a service like MDA does where they field their GDA, their midcourse defense systems today that rolls into the Army systems under NORTHCOM to do their defense.

So, I think we need to go back and look at the right way and who we're going to pin this on and move forward. And I think there are multiple options to do that. There's the service option.

I don't know if we'll get there. Fundamentally, I worry about that. You heard Ty talk about it a couple of times.

You know, it doesn't come with money. I think a service has an obligation when they're given a mission to articulate all the taskings they have with the limited resources they have to accomplish them and ensure they get the priorities of our nation's leader as they move forward. It's not just, hey, the mission didn't come with money.

Therefore, we're not going to do it. You know, the mission that Ty was alluding to came out in law. It's integrated air and missile defense of the homeland assigned an owner to that.

It came out in law in 2019. And by 2023, it had not been identified. The law specifically said the department will identify the right organization to lead this mission.

Four years later, that had not been done. That's a failure in itself right there. And it wasn't done until I brought it up in testimony, and at which time the department assigned the Air Force to do that mission.

So, what do we do? We pit people against each other in total obligation authority. We got to get past that and think about the big picture mission.

So, the assumption of Fortress America leads us to a comfort zone. And therefore, we don't fund key missions or new missions. And we agree to defer risk.

It's not that we really didn't act. I hate to say that. It's we just deferred the risk to sometime in the future, and we got called on that risk candidly.

The same thing can happen in our homeland right now. Although this administration is moving forward with Golden Dome, the bottom line is there are decisions to be made that look and reflect exactly what has happened against Iran in the Middle East for our homeland. And so, we shouldn't isolate this just to the forward fight.

We should apply the lessons back home. But the fact of the matter is we've been watching Russia and Ukraine since 2022. We've had plenty of time to assess this threat.

We knew what Iran had for capabilities. And fundamentally, we left a gap below the patriot fad, the strategic kind of level of assets that allowed us to have some gaps in capability candidly. I also want to talk about planning.

And, you know, we rolled in on a three plus decade infrastructure, if you will, base dispersion and likely laid down our force structure for something that worked in the past, but we were there to do something fundamentally different. But candidly, we were building

the bike while we're riding it as well. So, we're still doing, you know, counterterrorism, counter-proxy activities from an existing force lay down while trying to build a base to fight a major regional war.

And I'm not sure those two are fundamentally too easy to apply simultaneously. But basics in planning, dispersal, deception, moving things around. We know the Chinese have used satellite imagery to help them target, but if they're not in the same place for more than 12 to 24 hours, and I'm talking about airplanes, people, etc., whether that's agile combat employment or just, you know, basic dispersal and denial techniques, we've got to get back to some of those basics. They're going to treat us well, things that we can utilize. Air base defense, I cannot believe that a manned fighter could fly well into Saudi Arabia and drop bombs on a US base and fly home and land, but fundamentally, according to sources, that's what happened. So, I question, is that a planning failure?

It's certainly not a capability failure as we had multiple assets in place to take that down. So, we have to go back and look at planning as well. Anything that we develop, whether we acquired or ops, has to be affordable.

It needs to be fielded timely. It has to be effective. It has to be integrated, open source, able to accept data from allies and partners, pass data to allies and partners.

They bring incredible domain awareness and incredible capabilities. And the solutions that I see out there is a service model. We can give it to a service to do it.

It could be a model like a joint interagency task force 401, where we stand up an organization of the Joint Force led by a Joint leader from the interagency as well to acquire and field capabilities. Call that a missile defense agency, call it what you want. But that's another model.

Or it could be a whole new command, as you alluded to earlier. I'm convinced that Chairman Kaine sees the need. He'll look at all opportunities.

He'll present something to the secretary for consideration and to the White House and Congress to fund. I'm just not sure if it'll be fast enough. We need to go fast.

We need decisions now and we need to move out, quit deferring the risk. And this applies not only forward, it applies in our homeland. I'll pause there, Ricky.

[Riki Ellison]

Well done. Could you just give us the crisis that we're in right now? How do we, from your perspective, how do we solve that right now?

If they break the ceasefire and stuff's coming, how do we solve those base defenses right now? And then I'd like to ask the second question, your recommendation on that four-star command, what the pros of it are and what the cons are of it with that. Those are the two questions I'd like to see if you could be specific about a little more.

[Glen VanHerck]

But I think we need to go look at what has already been built that exists today that the COCOMs candidly have led, not the Department of Services in many areas, to integrate,

whether it be CD, whether it be the guide work we did, the work that CENTCOM, EUCOM are doing, the work that we've helped the Ukrainians do, but candidly that they've really done themselves and been really innovative in to field affordable, attritable capabilities.

And we need to get some of those onto the battle space right now. Broadly beyond that, let's get innovators in industry that can move forward and quit telling the Primes what to build. Tell them what problem we're trying to solve and allow those that are innovative to innovate and bring solutions to us with the characteristics that I talked about, affordable, attritable, integrated, open source, that we can move out and field right away, whether that be for the homeland, whether that be forward.

But the existing process where we go through a large requirements process, we winnow that thing down to this is exactly what we want you to build. And then they go out over time, build it, we iterate, we acquire, we develop, we test, and it takes 15 years to do. That's not the solution, and that's not the model right now.

We need industry out there telling us this is what you need and to move faster.

[Riki Ellison]

Just on that point, just coming from my meeting today in the Pentagon, our industry is real good at creating prototypes. So, we've got a lot of prototypes that are out there that may not be combat proven, but they're prototypes out there. Ukraine's got that.

But none of the industry, none want to take the risk to have production facilities and scale up. Nobody's taking that risk right now in the U.S., nobody. Ukraine's been very effective as they've got that capability.

Their manufacturer is within three kilometers of where they're farming that stuff. Our industry's not been given a signal or not taking risk on scaling and manufacturing. That's why I'm clear to understand what's going on right now.

[Glen VanHerck]

Well, if you're industry, Ricky, you have to look at dysfunction in our government right now that doesn't put out a predictable demand signal. We can't pass a budget on time. We haven't for many, many years.

It's been since the 1970s since all appropriations were passed on time. And so, industry is looking for a predictable signal, and then they will invest to move forward. I'm talking primarily the Primes.

The innovative ones right now are primarily the smaller and medium-sized businesses. They come up with great ideas. The challenge for them is scaling in a manner to meet the demand of the large Department of Defense or Department of War, if you will.

So that requires collaboration across industry to do that, but it requires predictability. I think the department realizes that they're putting money in to put stability and predictability into industry right now, but that will lead us to being able to adapt and go faster.

[Riki Ellison]

And you think that's going to be far quicker in the next six months or next three months, what can we do? Just that out of curiosity, but that's the frustrating thing.

[Glen VanHerck]

Well, first of all, you have to have a plan for air defense with the assets you have there, the fighters, the weapon systems you have. Look at affordable passive collect capabilities that have been fielded on the battle space that can be scaled out in a manner that you can rapidly put them in place to defend our forces, give you the domain awareness you need. I don't know if they give us the technology, and we can get innovative companies, and this is not hard to do.

Give us the technology, we can pay you for your technology and move forward. We can scale it out ourselves and field it rapidly in the next six months to a year.

[Riki Ellison]

This question, because I saw it, you're the base commander and your areas are so big and your capability can be configured to defend one or the other. You've got human life part of the base, and you've got your billion-dollar weapon part of the base, and we're coming to choices, and that's not right either. And obviously, I would think that it would protect our people first, but you hear what I'm saying on that?

We're limited in our ability to do both right now, from my understanding.

[Glen VanHerck]

Well, we're going to have to ride and chew bubble gum at the same time. We have to do both. We need to defend our people.

We need to field the capabilities right away, but more importantly, I think we need a long-term strategy and plan to spin up industry, to spin up capability, to plug this gap in our domain awareness, in our fielding of capability to defend from Group 1 through 5, UAS, cruise missiles, military-style drones such as the Shahed 136, all the way up to ballistic missiles and hypersonics. These are gaps for us right now, Ricky. Gaps in capacity, gaps in capability, gaps in domain awareness.

All things that we need to look at. If the policy decision is made to go after them, then go after fielding the capabilities. If the policy decision is made to accept the risk, then just be ready to accept that risk and build plans to execute with that policy.

[Jamie Jarrard]

There are things that we do at a tactical level in the Army, and I'm sure the other services as well, such as you shoot a fire support system and then you move it immediately for survivability. Back to General VanHerck's point earlier about proper planning, we've got to be innovative in our techniques, tactics, and procedures, just like our adversaries are, and we've got to change the way we're operating. If we can't protect ourselves with capabilities, then we've got to do it in some other fashion in the near future until we have the ability to sort ourselves out with better capabilities.

[Riki Ellison]

Thank you, Jamie. Then just the last point, creating a new service, is that the answer or not to do this?

[John Rood]

I don't know that I have the right answer, but I'm not a fan of more bureaucracy to do this, candidly. I think there's ways to bring existing services and mechanisms in place to accomplish this, not more bureaucracy.

[Jon Thomas]

Just to interject, if you go down that road, you'll create a new service for just about everything, and the reality is cyber service, other things, SOCOM service, you can spin yourself into having 50 services, but the issue is the services we have, we already have several, they've got to cooperate and you've got to have an integration authority.

[Riki Ellison]

How does Golden Dome fit into this? Certainly, they're getting a lot of money, they're supposed to do the C2 joint, and the LAD part of it, the limited area defense part of it, seems to be much more being created in the Middle East on our basis, much faster than anything that they would do. How does that fit in?

That's a lot of money, 200 billion probably. How does MDA with 12 billion, how come we're not putting that kind of thought and money and resources that are already there into this problem, which is going to be their problem too, I would think.

[John Rood]

Let me talk about that. It's 185 billion, according to General Guetlein, and let's remember, Golden Dome is not just space-based interceptors, it's everything from Group 3 UAS up to hypersonics and space-based interceptors. So, it should fit into it, Ricky, and Golden Dome needs to take the lessons learned from what we see going on in the Middle East right now and apply those to the capabilities they're fielding right now.

So, it will apply and transfer that to the homeland. Golden Dome's focused on the homeland, but the lessons need to be shared fully across the department and the interagency and with our allies and partners.

[Jamie Jarrard]

And it needs to be an open-source architecture that allows data from everybody and also allows for the innovation to take place that we're not just going to field a capability that's going to be good for the next 50 years. It's going to need to innovate and iterate and stay abreast of any threat that does develop out there.

[Riki Ellison]

All right, any comments?

[Glen VanHerck]

Will Mike Guetlein and the Golden Dome for America team be allowed to focus on this? And if it's a win, but the others aren't, we consider them successful. I think they have to focus on this.

I think they have to be given this as a priority, and they have to be successful. It's not a technical challenge like some of the other parts of this, specifically hypersonics, but it's a crucial task for them. I worry sometimes, though, that the attention is on the higher-end parts of Golden Dome for America and not on this, what I would characterize as a lower-end threat.

[Riki Ellison]

It's a different way of looking at things, and that's where you get afraid of some of these big agents like MDA, like Golden Dome, that don't have operators interfacing with them to be able to help create some of these solutions, because it's all technical. And then you get in a situation where we are in some of these systems, where we are right now in the Middle East, that weren't developed with the operators in full connection with the acquisition team.

[John Rood]

So, Ricky, I'm going to pile on to what Ty said. The bottom line is Golden Dome knows this is a problem. They're focused on it.

We don't have a technological problem. What we have is culture, policy, problem to go faster, to integrate and collaborate. The technology exists to solve these problems.

The question really is, are we going to apply the resources to people and change the culture to field it in a timely manner and address the problems? That's what we have to do.

[Riki Ellison]

And Glenn, do you think that we, as a nation, will dedicate resources to this mission now, or it's going to be to fight them again with trade balances? These services don't want to give up, because they're going to have to give up some of their money to do this. There's no way you can do this.

There's too much capacity.

[Glen VanHerck]

That's why it seems very difficult. I'll go back to my comment. If you get a trillion and a half dollars in a budget, or now we're getting a trillion dollars, there's enough money to do this.

The question is, is it a priority for the services and the department? And I would hope that losing American lives, losing billions of dollars of assets would move this up the priority poll just a little bit so that they do apply the resources. You cannot execute agile combat employment and fight a fight in the Pacific Ocean globally with China without being able to defend your infrastructure and your bases, including here in the homeland.

And so this should be an eye opener for folks. I know General Wilsbach gets it. I'm assuming that the other Joint Chiefs see this.

I guarantee it. General Cain gets it as well. I'm hoping that the policymakers will move forward and make sure that happens.

[Riki Ellison]

I think we're over 15 minutes, so I don't know if we're going to open it up for questions. I just would like closing remarks, most likely, if that's okay. I really appreciate it.

This has been a great discussion. This has been real. It's been real, real.

And I think this is going to and certainly illuminate and advocate for what we've got to have, resources, change the culture, and win. I'd like to send it around the room to closing remarks. So, Ty, you want to start?

[Jon Thomas]

It's a time for action, Ricky. I mean, there have been attempts at action. There have been some actions.

There needs to be more action. There's a lot to be done. Let's get going.

[John Rood]

John, I'd echo that. It most certainly is a call for action, and we've just got to be motivated to do that, or there's going to be more losses in blood and equipment.

However, on the point about getting industry involved, industry will respond when the Defense Department calls. What you've got to have is clear acquisition authorities, clear lanes to where they can see the return on investment, and we have to break some of the dogma around in order to go fast and take risk, risk and return in industry are linked. And that means you've got to put forward a clear path to a significant return, and you've got to be willing to move at the speed of relevance to accomplish that in a way that they don't see this as spending a lot of money towards a dead end or that take the bait about investing a lot in a certain area only to see the capability not be realized or real opportunity not be there.

So we've got to tap into that innovation engine, but it requires operating differently in how we incentivize it.

[Riki Ellison]

Thank you, John. Jamie?

[Jamie Jarrard]

Ricky, I agree with everything John said. There are some young companies out there that are doing what we need them to do. I mean, the one that's building the Lucas platforms right now is one of those examples.

So, we just need to re-incentivize them to continue what they're doing, and hopefully others will follow. And it is absolutely a time for action, as everybody's saying. We have to move, and we've got to move fast to make sure that what has happened over the last couple of months or month or so doesn't happen again.

Thank you.

[Glen VanHerck]

Thanks for the time, Jamie. Glenn? Yeah, thanks, Ricky, and thanks for what you do every day to highlight this stuff.

And I agree with John. Industry will move. We just have to make sure our priorities are clear, and there's no doubt about it, and that we're willing to put the money where the priorities are, and they'll move out for us.

We've got to get out of a comfort zone. We are no longer a unilateral power that can go everywhere we want, Fortress America, wherever we go, and not count on being hit with a military threat. That's the fact, and we have to adapt to that and move out quickly.

[Riki Ellison]

Thank you, Glenn. Just a phenomenal discussion and perspectives on where we have to go, where we most likely will go. I just want to close and tell you where the urgency is and what I believe the urgency is going to get done now.

And the critical thing, the critical thing is the open C2 backbone that you can plug other systems American systems in, unclassified, non-classified, to be able to put capacity in now. That has not been developed, and we are doing that from three years ago with UCOMM to be able to get this thing right and then be able to take technology and scale it. Take it.

That's the only thing we can do right now. That's what's going to save these bases, first and foremost, is to have a plug-in C2, because the other stuff you have to go through all sorts of processes. You're not skipping any of that, and you're not going to have any capacity or capability for another six months, at the most, with unproven capabilities.

You've got to go with what you've got that works and create that C2, and then you fit the C2 into our exquisite systems to play. I'm just trying to fill the gap. We're hitting this gap.

You cannot do nothing, because if you don't do anything, it's going to get worse. That's all they've got, and they're going to come at you. So that's what the movement is, and I'm afraid it got down to the warfighters having to do this, because the rest of the groups are not in sync with this.

We haven't broken the glass in culture and resourcing to do this, and obviously that's going to happen. An industry has to be set loose to go do this. So, it's emotional, because you saw it.

Uncontested. American lives are yeah. We're in it, and we have to fight it, and I appreciate each of you guys with your courage to stand up publicly and say, yes, we've got a problem, and here are the solutions that we can as a nation to be able to solve that problem.

That was a great discussion. Thank you.