

Virtual CRT: Ghostbusters

[Riki Ellison]

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, from Southern California, from Manhattan Beach, on a beautiful day here in Southern California. I'm Riki Ellison. I'm the founder and chairman of the Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance. Our mission is pure, simple, and powerful. Defending our people, our nation, and the world from ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, drones. And we've been doing this for over 20 years as an organization. And I've been doing this over 40 years as an organization, as a leader in this field.

This is our 99th Congressional Roundtable, and it's appropriate to have it here in Southern California, where 40 years ago, President Ronald Reagan led the charge on the Strategic Defense Initiative here.

This virtual is a follow-up to who you're going to call that we did on Monday on Ghostbusting. Our issue, missile defense, you can draw it all the way back to 83, has been ghosted. It has been ghosted as a theory from advocates against it, feeling that it was destabilizing to the world that created an armed race that didn't. It was ghosted because the technologies said could never be done. But those ghostings were proven wrong.

And we can attest to the first Patriot shoot down in the early 90s. We can attest to the great movement the Aegis systems have done from Wayne Meyer and building the capability that shoots down on a regular basis in the early 2000s. And we validated missile defense technology works. No question.

Still ghosted. Still ghosted of our Department of War, our Department of Defense, never, ever moved more than one and a half percent, maybe, of its entire defense budget was spent on defense. Ghosted. Ghosted.

We continued to see the ghosting, especially in the funding and resources and the manpower of our air defense branch in the U.S. Army. Ghosted. And we've come to reality that you cannot ghost us anymore from what has happened today in the Middle East.

We have done, I'm going to put it in football terms, we did a phenomenal pass rush, blitz package, unblocked, unblocked, just crushing it. But we let the flat open and we got scored upon. And defense wins championships. They don't score. They don't win.

So we went over this very extensively with our board members in a great discussion on Monday. We have one of our board members here, retired Rear Admiral Mark Montgomery, that I want to give him an opportunity to talk about ghost busting and the ghosting that we've had that's happened over the last 40 years, but more recently, the last 12 years where systems have never come to the field.

IAMD has been neglected in this country and in the world. But those days are done. American lives are at stake, cost American lives, cost billions of dollars of infrastructure.

We also have Ty here, a fellow board member, who was with me in the conversation on Monday, and also the Air Force. And I want to give credit to the Air Force. They and the budget just announced \$1.4 billion is going to go into air-based defense. We've seen

another movement big time on automated command of \$70 billion going into that drone defense and drone offense.

So that's the discussion today. And I appreciate you're listening and we're going to get after it. Okay. So ladies and gentlemen, retired Admiral Mark Montgomery, MDAA Board Member. Mark.

[RADM (Ret.) Mark Montgomery]

Hey, Riki, thank you very much. Honored to be here. Riki, I, and Ty are all here for the USC, University of Southern California, SHIELD 25 program. I think our fourth year of SHIELD, fifth year of SHIELD. Kind of all blends together. You know, phenomenal capstones. I hope over the next few weeks, we'll all come back. We'll come back to you with some of those, or in the next few months, some of the product of the students here. It's just a fantastic opportunity. If you don't know about the SHIELD program, go on the MDAA website, take a look and, or contact Riki directly. It's a great opportunity for service members, but also people in related industry, missile defense industries, to get a leg up on all the intricacies of missile defense.

All right. Riki's right. Air defense during the 40-day offensive combat campaign against Iran did not shine. It had significant challenges. Some were laid out really aggressively on Monday. But I think there's two ways to look at this. You can look at it as a failure, or you can look at it as an opportunity. An opportunity because we weren't fighting China and Taiwan. We weren't fighting Russia and Kaliningrad. We were fighting Iran and the Arabian Gulf, which meant that even with some areas of substandard performance, it did not result in irreparable damage. It resulted in fatalities, it resulted in injuries, it resulted in lost equipment, but the mission was still able to continue. So we need to learn from this. Take the opportunity and learn.

But I first want to mention that there's a strategic failure that underlines this. It's not any one services, it's not any one procurement program that failed. The strategic thing that underlines it is something that Ty, Riki, I, and John Rood, another MDAA board member, wrote on extensively three years ago. And it is the failure of our air and missile defense roles and responsibilities to be properly aligned. Coming out of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, we've never properly realigned the roles and missions of ground-based air defense.

The Army understands and embraces the idea that they need to defend their own brigades in the field. And they've kind of aggressively procured the systems to do that. Everyone seems to understand their role in intermediate-range ballistic defense and short-range ballistic defense. But we have this hole in air defense.

This is a hole that when I was a junior officer, I was on a ship deployed in Europe, I would see Rapier and I-Hawk batteries all over Europe. And I think if you go back, you'll find out we had either somewhere between 23 and 26 battalions of these systems in the 1980s and 90s spread. There was no doubt in the mind of the United States Army that they were responsible for the ground-based air defense, whether it was for an air base, a logistics site, or their forces in the field. That recognition has faded over the last 40 years. A lot of it has to do with reapportionment of forces while we were fighting an adversary that did not have a

legitimate strike capability against us in both Afghanistan and Iraq. We did not recover from that.

And I'll very specifically talk about four things that we at MDAA have been harping on for five years, and every one of them reared their ugly head, in addition to the strategic issue I mentioned, and that's operational failures. Because no one felt accountable, a system like JLENS, an elevated sensor network, was abandoned. Look, I recognize one of the dirigibles, aerostats, got underway, ripped through Uncle Fester's farm somewhere in Pennsylvania, but it killed no one. And our immediate response was to work aggressively as a joint force to get rid of the program. And I have to say gently, no casualties.

If we got rid of every aircraft that had a class A occur to it, whether or not there were casualties, we wouldn't have any aircraft to fly. I think it's fair to say every aircraft had a class A. But we got rid of these JLENS, and the real reality was no one wanted to own that mission. And as a result, we have not embraced dirigibles. The Israelis have. We've talked about it on at least three of these MDAA videocasts over the last two years, that post-October 7th, they've used it aggressively, their two aerostats. Now one was damaged on the ground, but the others have done great in helping paint the air picture for the Israeli air defenders.

And look, could an aerostat be shot down? You bet. Can a plane be shot down? You bet. Can a ship be sunk? You bet. I mean, all these things are you bets. That doesn't mean you don't build them. That's the argument of people who don't want to have something, when they say, oh, well, there's a risk it'll get shot down. I get it. There's a risk everything will. So we need elevated network sensors, whether it's at 10,000 feet, 20,000 feet, 60,000 feet. These are decisions that the war fighters need to come to, that the requirements people need to drive, but we need these networks out there. They help maintain a much more accurate and solid picture.

The second one is low cost cruise missiles. I mean, my favorite line for five years, much to the chagrin of like Jamie Gerrard and others is, IFPC is the Phoenix Sons of Missile Defense. It's always two years away from being two years away. Well, now that two years kicked us in the ass.

Not having IFPC with a slightly lower cost missile than Patriot, like 25% the cost. We were put in a tough position where engaging low cost drones, if we didn't get the aircraft in position for it, to do an advanced position kill weapon system, rocket attack on it, it became down to, are you going to waste a \$4.2 million Patriot missile on this inbound \$25,000 threat? And I think this put the air defenders in a real challenge.

So first problem, lack of the elevated aerostats. Second problem, there's low cost cruise missile defense. And look, the Army still, I'm not sure when IFPC's going to—honestly, I think it's still two years away. I was told two years away in 2017. It's now 2026, nine years later. This is unacceptable.

Speaking of unacceptable, is the counter drone interceptors. Absolutely a known-known. Many of us who spend time in Ukraine came back, not just on these MDAA video casts, but in briefs to the Pentagon and other places and reported the remarkable performance of

Ukrainian counter drone interceptors. I couldn't think of all the names of these things. They have these crazy names like General Cherry Stinger, Octopus, Merops. There's seven or eight of them that I routinely saw in combat that cost somewhere between \$1,000 and \$10,000 apiece and had about a 60% to 80% likelihood of acquisition PK on Shahed drones.

The Ukrainians came to us last year and offered to work with us on these. They could see the hole in our swing, and we turned them down. That was a significant error and one that we really need to investigate what level of hubris led to that.

But the bottom line is dirigibles, low-cost cruise missiles, counter drones. My final one is IBCS. It's not two years away from being two years away. It's here now, but it was for years two years away, two years away. It is not ready for prime time, and it's decades old in the length of the program. This is unacceptable. The idea that we're trying to sell IBCS to our partners now really chuffs me because it's not functioning properly for us. Here are a series of systems that we allowed to take 5, 10, 15, 20 years and put ourselves off.

I'll give you one more just because I'm pissed. I just read that one of the other things we've noticed in Israel, in Ukraine, and in the world around is the amount of jamming and spoofing going on against our GPS-enabled systems. Then I find out that Raytheon's OCX, the system that was going to do the signal monitoring for the L5 frequency that is 30 times harder to jam, has been canceled after spending \$8 billion in 10 years. We've canceled it. We're going to go to Lockheed Martin and see if they can scrape it up somehow, and in the next year to two years have something running. But in the meantime, we've delayed several years our movement into a much more jam-free, spoofing-free environment that we could have with L5 antennas.

Space Force, to their credit, has launched the last three satellites for the system in the last six months. So we're already up at 21 satellites, the notional healthy system, but without a system to monitor it. Now, the overall satellite architecture was 15 years late. Shockingly, OCX was 10 years late and then canceled to not be able to support it. So extremely frustrating.

So I'll just say that if I look at all those systems, now that's a lot of negativity coming from me. But I think we need to think about this as opportunity. As I said, this wasn't Taiwan. This wasn't Kaliningrad. This wasn't us being defeated on the battlefield. We escaped it, and now we need to figure out how do we integrate all those things rapidly in the system? How do we get low-cost cruise missile defense? Is it IFPC? Is it another system? Where do we go forward on this? How do we drive down the cost of effectors so that we can deal with low-cost Shahed drones coming at us? How do we get counter drone interceptors and use them effectively, even if they're not in the link, because they're not at this point? And how rapidly can we feel the JLENs that we have in Stowage and look at other systems, such as the one that has been purchased for Poland or the one that exists in Israel, and see if they have value for us to help our forward deployed forces, whether it's in U.S.-European Command, Central Command, or Indo-Pacific Command?

So, things didn't go great. I listed a litany of challenges, but I'm telling you, we should flip the script, call it an opportunity, say we dodged a bullet, and spend. We just got a somewhere between \$1.1 trillion and \$1.45 trillion budget, somewhere between a 28% increase and a

42% increase in our DoD budget. Let's take some of that money and make sure that the Army and the Air Force, if necessary, are properly applying that to this mandatory mission of the defense of our forward-based forces, whether they're ground forces or air forces.

I will say one last thing. The Navy dodged a bullet on this, and I was trying to figure out why. I had to remind myself, when you're not on a Navy ship, you cannot actually claim another service is going to do this mission of defending your ship. So, in the end, the Navy had no choice but to spend the money on their own defense. I think that tells you what the real problem was, which was that the Air Force looked at the JROC, at the assignment of sub-responsibilities, and said, this is an Army mission. And the Army looked at the JROC and said, we got too many missions. And the truth is, we really need to buckle down, decide who's going to do this, and invest in the ground-based defenses of our forces, critical infrastructure, and the radars and airfields that our forces fly from. Thanks a lot, Riki.

[Riki Ellison]

Yeah. Thanks, Mark. Just stay with me here.

There is going to be resources now being flowing because we're reactionary. But I don't know if, that's part of the answer, but I think it's process and culture that has got to be addressed. You're going to keep doing this, and you don't have enough manpower. You don't have enough capacity to fill every single base, and you got to get out of that base. So, what's your solution? What is it here? Because we're going to spend money.

[RADM (Ret.) Mark Montgomery]

I think it starts with the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Vice Chairman, who own the missions of the services, who has what mission, to sit down and make a conscious decision on integrated air and missile defense. You're responsible for this, you're responsible for that.

I mean, the Navy gets off pretty easy. I think they can figure it out. But they've got to decide. If they're going to move a mission from the Army to the Air Force for airbase defense, for example, they need to articulate that out loud and direct it.

[Riki Ellison]

Well, how do you put Golden Dome? With Golden Dome, we're spending \$200. Is that separate from this?

[RADM (Ret.) Mark Montgomery]

I agree it sits over this, but I mean, Golden Dome is probably not going to help us on these drones. Not initially, not in the short term. I'm not even sure it's going to help too much on shorter range rockets, cruise missiles, things like that. It might, on our forward deployed forces. I think it'll be very good for hypersonic and ballistic missiles against our forward deployed forces. I get that. That's what it's oriented towards and the C2. But these things I mentioned, dirigibles or aerostats, low cost cruise missiles, counter drone interceptors. Some of them exist now.

The dirigibles exist. There's programs of record. Go get it. The counter drone interceptors exist in other countries. Go get them, make them our own programs. The one that's going to

kick our butt is a short-range cruise missile air defense intercept. What IFPC was supposed to do, and I'll tell you why it's hard.

Most of us have figured out that we've been able to really lower the cost of offensive weapons because we can 3D print them. The explosives are still the same cost, fuel is still the same cost. The Seekerhead, though, is not a rocket scientist. It's a GPS. It's something going to find a GPS position. It can get cheap. Defensive missiles are different. Defensive missiles, you're telling a missile, go on a couple mach to meet another weapon, go on a couple mach in a two meter by two meter block and go off. That requires skill. That requires cost. It requires the ability to adjust your flight to have that in the effector. And so they're going to be slightly more expensive. We've got to figure out how to solve that problem.

[Riki Ellison]

But beyond the technical problem, the command problem.

[RADM (Ret.) Mark Montgomery]

The culture is the ROC thing, I said. The culture is tell the army they own it, tell the Air Force they're going to have to do it.

[Riki Ellison]

Just percolating up there is a new auto command. Because they're trying to deal with this offense and defense capability with that.

[RADM (Ret.) Mark Montgomery]

One other thing I'll mention is I've watched the Ukrainians develop a reasonable integration between air-based counter drone with fighter planes, F-16s, using advanced precision kill weapon system and ground-based systems. Now look, they have an advantage that they're defending. They're watching the drones get fired 300 miles away, 200 miles away, get a chance to jump on them as they come in, as they cross the line of control.

[Riki Ellison]

Because they've got sensors forward.

[RADM (Ret.) Mark Montgomery]

We had the same great success. We kicked the crap out of a Shaheed drone launch at Israel twice, once with missiles that cost us a lot of money and once with these rockets, which didn't cost us a lot of money. And we were given silver stars. I remember it was quite the moment for the Air Force. It was fantastic.

Here's the problem. When they're firing these same missiles to 80 mile away targets in Bahrain, in Qatar, in Kuwait, it was hard. It's hard for the F-15 or F-18 or F-16 to get in position to really thin the herd or destroy the herd if you have no ground-based systems.

So you really have to have strong ground-based systems when you're close to the line of control, wherever the point where the enemy starts firing from. And when it's 80 to 100 miles like that, advanced precision kill weapon system may not be the perfect answer because you're asking a pilot to do a lot. There have been American pilots that have shot down six, seven drones in a mission. There's a Ukrainian pilot that shot down 11 drones in a

mission. But those are guys who are trailing a drone swarm for 150 to 200 miles, not something coming across the strait like that. And sometimes I think we forget that.

I think people looked at that and said, I got APKWS. I'm covered. You weren't covered. You were covered for a strike deep into Saudi Arabia or deep into Israel.

[Riki Ellison]

And you're still not covered by that.

[RADM (Ret.) Mark Montgomery]

Well, a strike in Israel, we've done that.

[Riki Ellison]

I'm not talking about Israel but what's been going on. You have to have a bunch of layers.

[RADM (Ret.) Mark Montgomery]

By the way, I would say the Navy has not covered itself in glory with its procurement plan on the APKWS. Only very recently did they shift to large scale production of this \$27,000 rocket. They were doing 1,000 a month for several years because they looked at it as a weapon for a helicopter. Not the weapon it was for fighters. And so, they've shifted now. BAE's got a couple billion, \$1.7 billion contract for it, but we were slow.

[Riki Ellison]

I still see seams because the Navy's got it. You've done better than anybody on a platform to process, get the data, change it, go back, but you're not integrated to the land. It's on its own.

[RADM (Ret.) Mark Montgomery]

You did bring up one other thing I want to mention. The Navy's done okay. But one of the things they have done really well is they learned in the Houthi engagements. And look, we had some bad days. We shot down an F-18. We're not all perfect.

But the Navy has, with Dahlgren, set up a very rapid, like you said, software upgrade system. That's the adaptive warfare we see the Ukrainians do. One of the only places I see it in the US military is in Aegis weapon software development, where they're turning and turning and turning. Instead of every six months or nine months, you get an update every six days or nine days. Thanks.

[Riki Ellison]

Let's shift over to the Air Force that are in charge of these bases a little bit. Our great board member, retired Lieutenant General Ty Thomas, who was with us on great, you did a great job, Ty, on Monday explaining that issue.

[Lt. Gen (Ret.) Jon Thomas]

Okay, great. Yeah, thanks, Riki. How much time do we got?

I don't want to go through all of the, you know, we had a great discussion on Monday. I'm not going to hit on those points. I'm going to try to hit a few different things and touch on a few things that Mark addressed.

First thing, though, is I'm going to appeal to our Air Force culture. What do I mean by that? So one of the great things about our Air Force is that we have a culture that is oriented around the air crew debrief, or some might say, you know, the fighter pilot debrief, where, you know, we go out and we fly and we come back and we talk about it and we call it like it is. And if somebody on that sortie was horrible, below standard, or if somebody was awesome, we're going to call it out for what it is. I think we are at a point where that type of Air Force culture has to come to the forefront on some of the things that we found occurred with our ability to defend against attack recently in Saudi Arabia. And I'm trusting and I'm confident that the Air Force will do exactly that, is adhere to our culture and figure out what went wrong and figure out how we're going to fix it.

That culture and that answer, the point that I'm making gets a little bit to the discussion that Mark brought up about and MDAA has touched on in the past about roles and missions. I quite frankly, I think we should be impatient and not wait. And here's why. Because I think ultimately the answer about responsibility for airbase air defense, or pick another point forward logistics point defense, or a really important naval support activity that's in Bahrain, all of it should orient to a certain extent to a distance on who has most at stake. That's who cares about defending it. And that's part of the reason why the Army isn't necessarily defending the air bases because they don't have the most stake there. Who does? Our United States Air Force. These are our power projection platforms and they have to be defended. And if the Army is not going to do it, we need to, the Air Force does.

So Riki made the point about, you know, so I haven't been able to comb through all the budget data. So, so just got the macro number, but you know, 1.4 billion in the budget submission for airbase air defense, really, really encouraging. That will provide resources that will translate into things and people to be able to better defend our air bases. Let us not forget though, in our military system that we have the whole other thing, the DOTMLPF. And if we are going to institutionalize a capability to be able to defend our air bases, whether they're forward or whether they're in the CONUS, and that's important to talk about as well, we've got to follow that resourcing gain with the DOTMLPF, all of those things that have to be done in order to make sure that it sticks and that our Airmen know what they're doing and they're trained to accomplish the mission that they're asked to accomplish.

So let's talk about, and so this is me bringing up something new that we didn't bring up on Monday. The distinctions between forward operating locations, power projection platforms, and you know, with that, that's air bases in Kuwait, that's in Saudi, that's in Jordan, that's whatever over there in CENTCOM. And you could say the same thing for Indo-Pacific or elsewhere. Those are typically operating locations that are in foreign countries. They are subject to some foreign rules, but we are there at the request of the host nation and they are giving us certain privileges and allowances to be able to operate there and to include defending ourselves from there. So to some extent, I would argue that our ability to do the things that are necessary to defend our air bases forward, our power projection platforms forward are actually a little bit more open than here in the CONUS. Why do I say that? And why does it matter?

First, why does it matter? Because there are power projection platforms here in the United States of America that we are going to fight from. Those are air bases in Missouri. Those are air bases in California, in New Jersey. And we are going to project global power from there and we have to make sure that those air bases in the United States of America can also withstand attacks similar to attacks that we've seen overseas. You might go, that could never happen. Well, I don't know. What did the Ukrainians do to the Russians deep into their own heartland? And not all those things just flew there. They got there via other ways. Think through how open our society is.

That's a real threat to our power projection platforms here in the CONUS. Now, one of the things that in active service, I saw that constrained commanders to defend their air bases was the fact that our air bases are subject to a lot of other agencies that aren't the Department of War slash Department of Defense. It's the FAA. It's other civil agencies. It's local agencies in some case. My point here is that commanders that have the responsibility and obligation to defend power projection platforms here in the CONUS need to have the relief to be able to defend their air bases.

So, if there is a rule or a reason why they can't use an electromagnetic system or they can't even necessarily use a kinetic system under certain circumstances, we have to find a way to give them the clarity to know that they can use the tools that they need to. And even on short notice, if the threat pops up, not some big advance warning, I don't think that we're positioned for that yet. I don't think those commanders have those authorities.

And so, as the air base goes through and works with the department and works with other agencies in the executive branch, we have to think through how we're going to make sure that all the awesome stuff that we're going to acquire and try to put to use can actually be put to use. The days of commanders not being able to have their security forces airmen pull an electromagnetic non-kinetic system out of their patrol vehicle because they don't have the ability to pull the trigger on it because of some rule, I think that needs to end. That's going to take a lot of work and dedicated effort, but I think it must be done.

That's it. I'll wrap it up there.

[Riki Ellison]

But your basic point is basically the service that owns those bases is responsible.

[Lt. Gen (Ret.) Jon Thomas]

I'm saying who has the most a stake.

[Riki Ellison]

Right but you would assume that service that owns that base. And you've now figured that out and you've put the money forward to do that. And that's what you're suggesting is the way forward for Marine bases to take it, Navy bases to be able to do a trade-off and put those resources in to do it that way. Is that the way to do this for forward operating base?

[Lt. Gen (Ret.) Jon Thomas]

We've tried it the other way. I would say that we've tried it the other way. Mark described the circumstance. The Army has the Air Base Air Defense Mission right now, and they don't

do it. It's not because they're bad people. It's because the Army has had other priorities and they'll say we haven't been resourced.

Well, if you're an Army leader and you're going to have to make a set of choices about what you're going to do with the limited set of resources in your defense of an Air Force asset falls below the cut line, I'm actually not surprised. With an Air Force leader, they know it's there. They don't have the out and say, well, the Army is supposed to do it. They know they have to do it. Are they going to maybe prioritize it higher? I think they probably will.

[Riki Ellison]

You don't have a separate like Missile Defense Agency or Golden Dome that's going to all of a sudden fund all this because they have nothing to lose.

[RADM (Ret.) Mark Montgomery]

All three of us contributed heavily to a roles and missions discussion paper. Ty refers to it routinely in these kinds of discussions. He's right. We have to roll back on that and the department has to make decisions. I think it's the vice chairman and the deputy secretary of defense kind of own this process. They've got to sign the mission properly. More people senior than them are going to have to sign off on it. But the two of them are going to have to make the decision, take it to the secretary.

This is the time to do it. If you're going to assign someone a mission that they had but weren't resourcing or never had, the only time you could do it and not just have screeching angst from a service chief is when there's excess money and you go, by the way, this pile of dough in the \$350 billion reconciliation that could be coming in a couple months is coming to you. You cannot assign a new mission in a resource constrained environment without putting the service in general at risk. The Air Force is not in a position to stop building F-35s or stop building B-21 or stop doing base repair.

This is the time to do it. If you're going to assign, even if you're sending it back to the Army, who legitimately turned most of these air defenders, these large numbers of air defenders into other mission sets or grew them into SRBM and IRBM, THAAD, and Patriot people.

[Riki Ellison]

They killed SHORAD 20 years ago. We won't get into all of that.

[RADM (Ret.) Mark Montgomery]

I don't want to get into that but I'm going to say Ty is spot on. This is a cultural issue. I think it's beyond the services. I think it's the department needs to set the standard and then the services execute the mission.

[Riki Ellison]

Ty, I just want to go back to you because I was over there. You can't defend the base and wait for all the stuff to come across your fence line. You can't do that. You can figure out how to do it back in the day, but with the mass that's going on, you have to be outside the fence line. You have to be way out there as far as possible with sensors, with shooters to go in. Most of that is foreign countries. That's not a service deal. How do we do that?

[Lt. Gen (Ret.) Jon Thomas]

I only lightly touched on that, but my point when I said to a certain extent, it should orient on those that have the most at stake. How you define that line, there's a lot of different ways to do it. You get to a certain point and there's area level responsibilities and area level sensors. And to Mark's discussion and example with Shahed's at distance versus close up, the Air Force, who cares a lot about that individual airbase, might actually be doing something 350 nautical miles from it that's using APKWS to take down threats. It actually turns out that, we don't know it, but that threat was maybe headed towards an Army Logistics Depot or something like that.

So how you build out the architecture and who has the responsibilities still, I think, to be determined. The closer in you get, the one that has the most at stake has to be involved in it and own, especially the last few segments.

[Riki Ellison]

Yeah the other thing we got wrong is we spent the most expensive weapons the further way out and the cheapest weapons to use is the close, but we'll never, that ship, as Mark clearly says, the ship captain will empty everything before that happens. We have to have our foreigners, not foreigners, our allies, to be able to support some of this unclassified stuff that we can put in. Someone's got to be in charge of that.

[RADM (Ret.) Mark Montgomery]

Finally, let me get one last lick in. I know it's time to wrap, but people talk about directed energy, and I love directed energy, but directed energy is not there yet. Right now, directed energy's first time to launch, when you can legitimately know you'll get a kill, is after the last time to launch for a kinetic weapon. If my son's ship captain said, "Hey, sir, my plan for the defense is we're going to wait and take it with the laser", I'd be like, get a new ship captain, right? I mean, because you don't wait. Right now, directed energy is a last-ditch defense effort, like the Gatling, like C-RAM for the Army, like CIWS for the Navy. It's a last-ditch defense weapon. Until we can get it, it ranges like 20 to 30 kilometers with high P-kills, so that if you're wrong, you can get what we would call an ESSM in the Navy off before its last time to launch. So, that's a great thing for us to work on. I didn't bring directed energy up because I don't think it's mature enough yet. Everything I mentioned are things that need to get there. Dirigibles, JLENS they're there.

[Riki Ellison]

Yep, yep, yep.

[RADM (Ret.) Mark Montgomery]

All right. Thanks very much.

[Riki Ellison]

I just want to close it up, right? I mean, I think we're done being ghosted. It's pretty fair that this mission set is done being ghosted.

[RADM (Ret.) Mark Montgomery]

It's in the open.

[Riki Ellison]

It's in the open. There's still going to be some ghostbusting to be done.

Ty, do you want to have any closing comments?

[Lt. Gen (Ret.) Jon Thomas]

No, I'm good.

[Riki Ellison]

All right. I think it's a great discussion. Ghostbusting needs to be done. We're done with being ghosted. This is real. We're going to resource it. We're going to change the culture, and we're going to change the process. That's going to happen. And this administration is going to lead that. The service is going to lead that happening. We're recognizing it today. So, thank you for listening, and appreciate it. Have a great day.