

Iran Wins Strategic Dominance. US Out of Options | Steve Starr

March 13 Iran War Update: Prof. Steven Starr presents the news from the kinetic war with an overview of targeted and disabled US military installations and a discussion on the Iranian capacity and strategy as discernible after 2 weeks of warfare. Support us on Substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> Steven Starr's homepage: <https://nuclearfamine.org>

#Pascal

Welcome back to Neutrality Studies, everybody. My name is Pascal Lottaz, and I am joined again today by Professor Stephen Starr, the former director of the University of Missouri's Clinical Laboratory Science Program. Professor Starr has been on this show several times, and I'm very glad that he's back because he's got an update for us about Iran. Stephen, welcome back.

#Steve Starr

Well, thanks for the invitation. It's a pleasure to speak with you.

#Pascal

Well, thank you very much for preparing this for us, because you actually have a presentation here on what's happening and on the kinetic effects of the war in the Middle East right now. Could you please take it from here and walk us through your presentation?

#Steve Starr

Yes, I'd be glad to. Well, you know, I believe most people in the West aren't really getting much news about what's actually going on there. It's hard, because they say truth is the first casualty in wartime. I've titled my presentation *Iran Strikes Back.* This slide shows that all the red spots are U.S. military bases that have been hit by Iran after, you know, the U.S. and Israel initiated the war by killing the Ayatollah and his family. But the U.S. and Israel are not winning their illegal war against Iran—and I'll explain why. You know, Iran is close to the Strait of Hormuz. That in itself is a tremendous blow against the West.

This blocks 20 percent of the global oil and liquefied natural gas that flows through the Strait, and also 30 percent of the area's fertilizer production, which is a major component of agriculture here in North America and all around the world. The oil refineries and liquefied natural gas plants around the Gulf are shut down—some of them are burning. They've been hit by drones and missiles. And

once you shut down a plant like this, you can't return it to service quickly. It'll be out of service for months because the wells start to clog up. There are a lot of things that have to happen; you don't just throw a switch. So, what are the implications of that for the global economy?

Iran has destroyed most of the large U.S. radar systems in the Gulf region. This came as a total shock to the United States, I think—though I'm not sure why. It's degraded the U.S. and Israeli air defense systems, which are also running out of interceptor missiles. That's partly because the U.S. has supplied a large number of them to Ukraine and to Israel as it's been carrying out operations in Gaza over the last couple of years. But the U.S. only manufactures about 750 Patriot and 450 THAAD interceptors a year, and we just don't have the industrial base to keep up. U.S. naval vessels can no longer dock at American military bases in the region—their bases have been hit.

The headquarters of the Fifth Fleet was wrecked by Iranian missiles. You know, a U.S. destroyer uses vertical launch tubes to fire its interceptor and Tomahawk missiles. Once those are exhausted, they have to return to port because a crane is needed to reload them. These are vertical launchers—you can't just move missiles from one ship to another and load them at sea. So that means they have to travel several days to reach India or Diego Garcia, which takes them out of the theater. The destruction of the U.S. radar in Qatar—a very sophisticated phased-array system—has reduced the warning time for missile attacks in Israel to about 90 seconds.

And they don't even know which way the missiles are coming from—they just have a minute and a half. So this really changes things for the people of Israel. Let me explain more about this radar system. If you look down there in the right corner, the AN/FPS radar was based at the U.S. military base in Qatar. It's positioned at a high altitude and can scan up to 5,000 kilometers, providing the initial location of incoming warheads. This is critical because the THAAD radars, and also the sea-based radars they link to, require that initial information—they're more like flashlights; they can't just look around on their own.

They have to know approximately where the warhead is before they can focus on it. So, if you knock out the large radar, it more or less blinds them. These missiles are coming so fast—the warheads—they don't have time to look around. Basically, the loss of this radar blinds the THAAD and ship-based systems by removing their initial target acquisition. This shows the locations of the U.S. radar systems that were essentially the eyes of the Iron Dome in Israel. Richard Medhurst created this map—thanks for that. I added the images on there. You can see there was one in Jordan, one in Saudi Arabia, two in the United Arab Emirates, and the large AN/FPS radar was in Qatar.

#Pascal

And just to be sure—the four there, they're not mobile, right? Oh, yeah. Well...

#Steve Starr

The THAAD systems—I'm not sure if they're movable, but I honestly can't answer that question adequately. You'd need somebody like Larry Johnson to tell you. But I do know they were destroyed, and there are only about 13 in the whole U.S. inventory.

#Pascal

I'll write the question down, because I'll be speaking to him in an hour and a half.

#Steve Starr

Okay, good. Give him my regards.

#Pascal

I'll tell him.

#Steve Starr

Okay. So you can see the image there—that's the dome that was...

#Speaker 1

This satellite image just revealed what the Iranian drone did to the \$1 billion U.S. radar at Al Udeid Base in Qatar. The FPS-132 upgraded early-warning radar is a massive long-range ballistic missile detection system with a claimed range of up to 5,000 kilometers. It's designed to spot targets all across the Gulf, but it was destroyed by a single Iranian Shahed drone that cost only a fraction of the radar's price.

#Pascal

Wow, I didn't realize that. I showed that video at the very beginning of the war myself—I didn't know it was this important.

#Steve Starr

Yeah, I didn't either, honestly. But we use those same systems in the United States—there's just a handful of them. There are only 13 THAAD radars in the U.S. inventory, and Iran has destroyed about 30% of them. You can see what's left of one of them there.

#Pascal

Wow.

#Steve Starr

In Bahrain, Iran destroyed the two SATCOM terminals, as shown in the before-and-after satellite images. In Kuwait, Iran destroyed the satellite communications network. So you can see the comprehensive destruction of all these systems. The loss of radar means that U.S. and Israeli air defenses are neutralized. The THAAD and Patriot missiles can't quickly locate targets without the phased-array radar that was in Qatar, so they're rendered ineffective. The lower-level tactical intercepts from U.S. Navy systems and the Israeli Iron Dome also become less effective because they don't have that initial targeting information either.

The loss of U.S. radar means that Israel now has only a 90-second warning for an incoming missile attack, which I mentioned before. I think that's pretty important if you're in Israel. And U.S. ballistic missile defense systems, even with radar, can't intercept hypersonic missiles. These missiles are maneuverable at hypersonic speeds. You know, ballistic missile defense implies a ballistic trajectory—a parabola, a predictable path. Well, hypersonic missiles aren't like that. They don't travel in a parabola, they don't follow a ballistic trajectory, and they're maneuverable. The U.S. doesn't even have a working prototype of a hypersonic missile.

But Iran actually does have hypersonic missiles in its inventory, just like Russia and China. So, you know, we can't defend against Chinese or Russian nuclear missiles aimed at the United States if they're coming in on hypersonic missiles. U.S. BMD never worked as advertised. Dr. Theodore Postol has done a couple of really good interviews with Glenn Diesen and Pascal Lottaz where he elaborates on this. I've read his articles for decades. He's been trying to point out in the United States that, in the tests they did for ballistic missile defense, they put homing beacons on the incoming warheads so the system could identify and hit them. I don't think any of our potential enemies would be willing to do that for us.

#Pascal

Yeah.

#Steve Starr

So, you know, Iran warned on March 8th that if any region, if anybody, targeted their oil facilities, they would respond in kind. Well, an Iranian refinery was hit, and this video was taken in Tehran. There was so much oil that it was just flowing through the drains in the city and ignited. From the pictures, it looks like some of the drains were even inside some of the buildings. You can see the streets lined with fire, and the fumes from the burning oil are horrible.

#Pascal

It looks like the end times. It looks like Armageddon.

#Steve Starr

Yeah. Well, Iran has responded. They hit the United Arab Emirates' biggest refinery. They also hit Bahrain's Bapco refinery, a huge one. So this is spreading, and it doesn't seem to me that it's stopped yet.

#Pascal

And, you know, Steve, I just want to say, we've now had this UN Security Council resolution, which I still don't understand how it could have passed—how Russia and China didn't veto it. It's the resolution condemning Iran for its indiscriminate attacks against its neighbors, even though every single time Iran responds in kind to the infrastructure of the alliance that attacks them. But this is what's happening.

#Steve Starr

It's Orwellian. You know, Iran struck the power plant in Haifa.

#Pascal

You know, these images don't make it to the evening news because Israel blocks everything. Yeah, it's hard to find them.

#Steve Starr

I've been looking around the internet. That refinery supplied 50% or 60% of the country's domestic fuel, including 65% of its diesel, 50% to 59% of its gasoline, and 52% of the kerosene used to make jet fuel. So that's a big blow to Israel. Well, Donald Trump—you know, I hate to quote him—but in one of his rants, he said, "If Iran does anything to stop the flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz, they'll be hit by the United States of America twenty times harder than they've been hit so far." Okay. Well, guess what? The Strait of Hormuz is now closed.

This is a video of a tanker that was hit just the other day. There's a map of the Strait of Hormuz down in the left corner—it's only 21 miles wide. It's not that hard to... I mean, Iran can shut that down without any problem, with all the missiles it has. It also has underground naval bunkers. In the U.S., you know, we're claiming that we've shut down everything, that there are no targets left to hit in Iran. Well, I seriously doubt that, because Iran is a country made of granite. And this is an underground naval bunker—some of it's actually underneath the sea.

#Pascal

They've been preparing for this for 30 or 40 years, and they knew they'd have to put things underground to make sure they couldn't be hit. And they did—including the boats.

#Steve Starr

So at this point, 20% of the global oil and liquefied natural gas is blocked. And 31% of the urea—that's a nitrogen fertilizer we use here in Missouri—is blocked too. It's a huge deal to block that. And 40% of the sulfur is blocked, and sulfur is a critical component for making the sulfuric acid required to produce phosphate fertilizer.

#Pascal

Right.

#Steve Starr

So it's not just fuel—the fertilizers are being blocked too. And this will probably lead to famine. Right. The production has shut down, as I mentioned. Qatar, the world's largest liquefied natural gas exporter—20% of its global LNG production has stopped. Wow. Once production stops, it can take months to resume, and Kuwait has halted production entirely. Saudi Arabia's Aramco has cut production in two fields. So this process is just unfolding. Bahrain has shut down and declared force majeure. It's the largest refinery. Force majeure means the contract can't be fulfilled because of unforeseen circumstances. It's pretty drastic. Half of the available global liquefied natural gas tankers are trapped inside the Persian Gulf right now. Another thing that we...

#Pascal

Even the shipping capacity isn't available to the global supply anymore, right? Even if you had a different supplier, you don't have the ships now because they're locked in.

#Steve Starr

Right. This is another thing I hope doesn't continue. But if they start targeting desalination plants in the Gulf, almost all the Gulf countries could become virtually uninhabitable. Look at the percentage of drinking water—90% for Kuwait, 70 to 90% for Qatar. Israel gets 80% of its water from desalination, and Iran only about 3%. So it's much less vulnerable than these other countries.

#Pascal

Israel gets 80% of its drinking water from desalination. Right. And they're foolish enough to attack Iran's desalination plants.

#Steve Starr

Exactly. It's suicidal. Jesus. It's like Estonia declaring war on Russia. You know? I mean, yeah, this is the only craziness in the world going on.

#Pascal

So I've got to ask—why are we doing this?

#Steve Starr

You know, 70% of Americans or more are against this war. Of course, we're against most wars. It doesn't matter who we elect—it seems like they just continue. But I found this picture of the U.S. Secretary of War, Pete Hegseth. I don't know if you've seen it or not.

#Pascal

I did. I did.

#Steve Starr

But check out his hat, too. It's the same—he's got a Jerusalem cross, the one worn by the Crusaders. Do you think he's in that mindset, like having a holy war in the Middle East?

#Pascal

Yes, he is.

#Steve Starr

This is Netanyahu at the UN. He's holding up his image of Greater Israel, which was first conceived by the father of political Zionism, Theodor Herzl. "Greater Israel" is a term that comes from the Hebrew Bible, where it says that God gave Abraham and all his descendants the right to a vast land from the brook of Egypt to the Euphrates. So that's what's driving this. It makes no sense to me. I mean, it's crazy for the U.S. to be behind this—and all the genocide and everything. But the Zionist Christians believe in it. That's how Hegseth is linked to this. They believe that Armageddon will herald the second coming of Jesus Christ.

And Hegseth is conducting prayer meetings every month at the Pentagon. There have been reports—over 200—from noncommissioned officers who say they've been at these meetings where the commanding officers are saying, "Don't be afraid, because if Armageddon comes, you'll go to heaven. You know, Trump is the anointed one." It's just beyond insane. But let's consider this. I mentioned that I don't think the U.S. has even begun to take out all the missile cities that Iran has.

Iran is as big as Western Europe. These cities are underground; they also have air bases underground. I believe it will take tactical nuclear weapons to destroy these military facilities.

And I think they're fully capable of using them. Some of the larger missiles are now being brought out, and they're starting to hit Israel. That image of rockets—those are solid-fuel rockets with a one-ton warhead. This is from a live broadcast in Israel. That's a 2,000-pound warhead hitting. That's what it's like if you're in Tel Aviv. Okay, well, tactical nuclear weapons used against Iranian missile cities would create massive fallout. You know, from nuclear testing in Nevada, they showed that a one-kiloton bomb has to be detonated about 100 meters, or 300 feet, underground to prevent it from venting.

So that's not going to happen. The B61-12 tactical nuclear weapon that the U.S. has can only penetrate the earth to a depth of three to four meters. And the W76-2 nuclear warhead that's carried on some U.S. Trident subs—well, we have low-yield weapons on our subs now, besides the large strategic ones. They have an explosive power of five to six kilotons, but they can't penetrate the earth either. So if they're used, there'll be massive fallout in Iran. This is an image of a B61 variable-yield bomb being dropped—it does disappear into the earth, but it only goes about three to four meters deep. It'll create massive fallout.

This is an image of venting from an underground nuclear test in the United States in 1970. It gives you a rough idea of what radioactive fallout would look like if they used one tactical nuclear weapon on a missile city. That's lethal—all that fallout. I mean, the United States was poisoned by our own nuclear tests too, but that's a subject for another time. I also want to mention that Iran has enough highly enriched uranium to make ten nuclear weapons. They have about 450 kilograms of 60% HEU, which can be enriched to 90% weapons-grade uranium in just a few days. Each weapon would have an explosive power of about 15 kilotons—that's similar to the bomb that detonated in Hiroshima. A kiloton is 1,000 tons of TNT, so 15 kilotons is 15,000 tons.

#Steve Starr

The design of these weapons is well known. You don't have to test them to know they'll work. And Iran certainly has the technical skill to make nuclear warheads and mount them on their hypersonic missiles, which Israel can't defend against. These warheads could also be delivered in the hold of a ship if they decided to do that. So I just want to end with one slide that really struck me—from the Palestinians. But, you know, we never see it from their perspective here. It's always "the Palestinian terrorists" and all that, but it's an occupied territory. Israel is a colonial state. They're colonial. So under international law, Palestinians have the right to defend themselves.

#Pascal

Anyway, hey, very brief intermission because I was recently banned from YouTube. And although I'm back, this could happen again at any time. So please consider subscribing not only here, but also

to my mailing list on Substack. That's pascallottaz.substack.com. The link's going to be in the description below.

#Speaker 1

And now, back to the video.

#Pascal

Yeah, no, thank you very much for that overview. I mean, this is highly, highly useful. You know, one of the things is, of course, that Israel and the United States try to block the news about the devastation inside Israel in order to pretend that everything is going according to plan. I mean, Donald Trump gave this ridiculous speech after one week of the war, saying, like, "Oh, on a scale from one to ten, I'd give our operation twelve to fifteen." I mean, the level of that speech is just quite incredible—and the childishness, the childishness of the framing, is quite incredible. But the hurt and the impact are now very real. How do you think— I mean, we are only two weeks into this, right? If this doesn't stop, what does it do to the infrastructure in the Middle East, in West Asia? And, you know, we are so used to our global supply chains being ready for everything that we're not even aware of how many things depend on that gulf staying open.

#Steve Starr

Well, that's right. There are some reserves, and they've opened up others to try to lessen the effects of the blockage of the Strait of Hormuz. But it's all very temporary, and, you know, with the destruction of oil refineries—and clearly Iran is not about to change its mind—I think this is going to go on for some time, and it's going to have a massive effect on the global economy. I mean, there's already a cascade effect in countries like South Korea, Taiwan, and Indonesia. Factories are shutting down already.

There's fuel. I think Australia has declared a fuel shortage. We're just beginning to see this. And, you know, gasoline prices have gone up a little bit in the United States. But, you know, wait till they get up to ten or fifteen dollars a gallon—or you can't get it at all. You know, we're really in trouble. And I think that Trump is going to panic. I mean, I think he is panicking. Apparently, they've been calling, trying to reach Iran to have ceasefire negotiations, and they're doing it through Oman, from what I read.

#Pascal

Yeah, which—that's the most sensible way to do it if you actually want to do it. But, you know, Iran—and I've had talks with Professor Marandi from the University of Tehran—he said very clearly, "Look, we're not going to accept a ceasefire until America not only promises to stop, but is actually gone, gone out of the region. Right? It has to leave the region, period."

#Steve Starr

So they're going to keep all the economic sanctions and leave the military bases. I don't think that's on Trump's agenda. But look at what the United States did—we began this. We were conducting peace negotiations for the second time, and we attacked them during those negotiations. They killed the Ayatollah, who wasn't just a political leader; he was the second most important religious figure in the Shia faith. I mean, this is huge. It's like a crusade, honestly, if you think about it. And the new Ayatollah is the son of the old one.

His family was killed—his daughter was killed—and he was injured in this attack. I seriously doubt he's going to be in the mood for conducting negotiations with Trump. It's, uh, we're at an impasse, and it's just... but there's so much propaganda here that people don't get it. They don't even realize the extent of the anger or the capabilities of Iran. Apparently, the American people, the White House, and even the Pentagon didn't understand some of those capabilities either—but they're finding out now.

#Pascal

Yeah, and I just need to share this one with you, just on the point of the Holy War. I mean, what you showed us is absolutely right, and we need to point this out time and again, because this isn't known well enough—that there are a lot of religious extremists in the United States, in the U.S. military. These Christian Zionist types have infiltrated the military. There's actually an organization called the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, MRFF. I didn't know about them, but I learned about them last week, and I'm now on their mailing list. It turns out one of the people on the MRFF board is actually Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, who's been on this channel and on other channels.

Lawrence Wilkerson is a very important figure, and he just wrote an update that was sent out last night to everyone, alerting us again about this problem. The MRFF, in the first week of the Iran war, received more than 200 calls from individual soldiers who complained that their commanding officers told them this was a religious war and that they would go to heaven—as long as they weren't Jewish or Muslim. As long as they were Christians, they'd go to heaven. You know, the end times would come. And this is, of course, an enforcement—an indoctrination—within the military.

What we learn is that the officer corps has already been, to some extent, indoctrinated. So it's not just at the highest level with the Secretary of War—it goes down into the military. And this is highly problematic. Wilkerson actually writes in this update, which he publishes in their newsletter, that there are so many extremely dangerous aspects of the war of choice on Iran that Israel and America are waging across the Middle East and increasingly elsewhere, that Americans are largely missing a particularly serious one with regard to their military. It's the result of what historians will likely label, at some future date, another Great Awakening.

And what he's referring to is this kind of religious zealotry that actually gripped the United States back in the early 1910s, when the U.S. went on to write the 18th Amendment—Prohibition—into the Constitution. That led to a lot of negative consequences, including large-scale organized crime, to the point that the 18th Amendment had to be undone with the 21st Amendment in '33. And he's saying this is happening again. There's so much solid, like, Christian fundamentalism going on, especially in the military, that it's causing serious damage to the nation. I just wanted to point that out.

#Steve Starr

Well, these people haven't just infiltrated—they've been selected. I mean, this has been a process cultivated by people like Hesheth. And, you know, we go on about the dangers of a theocracy in Iran, but what do we have going on here? Yeah, exactly.

#Pascal

This is a huge problem, of course, because I wasn't even aware there was such a strong religious undertone on the U.S. side. A lot of people aren't aware, but this is part and parcel of the picture. There are people who want this war for the sake of the war, because they think it's necessary to bring about the end times. So when they look at it, they must be applauding, because it gets them a step closer—which is really scary.

#Steve Starr

And then we have Israel with the Samson option. And, I mean, I really am quite concerned. I talked about it in an earlier presentation on your show, where Dr. Postel had images of what Tel Aviv would look like if it were hit by a thousand one-ton warheads.

#Pascal

Yes.

#Steve Starr

And I think we're going to see that unfold pretty soon. Yeah. And I don't think Israel will accept the destruction of its largest cities. I mean, their three largest cities hold about 50% of the population. And if Iran still has—well, I heard Larry Johnson say they had five to ten thousand ballistic missiles, at least at the beginning of the war—I suspect there are still many thousands left. So at what point will Israel start using nuclear weapons against Iran? Wilkerson, I believe, has said he doesn't think the United States would initiate nuclear weapon use, although I'd hate to see what would happen if a U.S. naval vessel or a carrier were sunk—how Trump would react.

But I tend to agree with Wilkerson. I think the real danger is that we have a rogue state—Israel—that's been committing genocide for the last two years, of course with the support of the United States, and it's armed with hundreds of nuclear weapons. And, you know, if their cities are going to be wiped out with Iranian ballistic missiles, I don't think there's any doubt they'll use nuclear weapons. So there we go. Then what will Russia do if a nuclear war erupts on its border? I mean, I just hope it can be stopped. I really do. I have to hope they're talking behind the scenes and that somebody's going to come to their senses and stop this process.

#Pascal

Yeah, I mean, at this point it actually takes two—no, actually three—to tango to stop this. Which just makes it even more difficult. The only ones who kind of don't have a choice, who have no say, are really the kingdoms in the Middle East, right? I mean, Bahrain, Kuwait, the UAE, and so on. They have everything to lose, nothing to gain, and no say in any of this. But the three protagonists—Iran, Israel, and the United States—although Israel and the U.S. are, of course, kind of under one blanket, both have decision-making powers, especially when it comes to nuclear weapons. Each of them can, on their own, decide to initiate it and drag the other along.

#Steve Starr

Well, that's right. I mean, you can talk to different people and get different ideas about who's making the decisions. I think Colonel Wilkerson would suggest that the United States is directing Israel. Brian Berletic would probably say the same thing. Yeah. But, you know, I don't know. I just see a country that's out of control, that's attacked every single one of its neighbors. I mean, that's insane. And 80 percent of the population apparently approves of the genocide, according to polls in Israel. So it's hard to be sympathetic. I don't know. It's horrible.

#Pascal

It is. It's understandable in the sense that we can rationally see how a society gets there, because we've seen it before, right? You just need to look at the old cowboy movies of the 1950s—those evil Indians who keep attacking those innocent settlers and killing the innocent ladies on the trails. Right? It's exactly that mentality.

#Steve Starr

The media promotes this racism, essentially—whether it's Russophobia or the Amalek thing, you know. When you have a Bible, a Schofield Bible, that's taught Americans for a long time that Armageddon is part of the Second Coming, you get all these Christians—everybody's primed for this. I keep trying to get them to see it. And as far as Russophobia goes, that's racism. Everybody seems to think it's OK to hate Russia, but they don't get that they're so sensitive about racism here in the United States—except when it comes to Russia. But that's, I mean, that's a separate topic. The root

of our problem is that we seem to be inclined to hate people. If we can make it a group hate, you start out with a leader like Putin, and then it becomes all the Russians. And I don't know—Israel, maybe it goes further back. But I do think the population is conditioned to hate, and it's really hard to overcome that.

#Pascal

Yeah. One of the things I wonder about now is these red lines on both sides, right? Because by now we're, I believe, at the threshold where all sides are thinking about the use of nuclear weapons. But we've also seen that Iran, to every single thing the US and Israel throw at them, has a response—a pre-prepared response. And they've been very clear about that, not only for this war but also for the previous ones. Whenever Israel did something to them, including blowing up their consulate in Damascus, they responded in a way that was very calculated. And now they did the same last year during the 12-day war. They're doing the same thing now.

They only start blowing up oil refineries, as you showed, once somebody attacks their oil refinery, right? They only target desalination plants in Israel and in other states once their own desalination plant gets targeted. So the message is extremely clear: if you throw something at us, we'll throw something proportionally back at you—and we have the capability to do so. So this, of course, must extend within their planning to the nuclear level. The question to me is, if Israel threw a nuke at them, what would they throw back that would be proportional? And my question is, could they throw back just a couple of their hypersonic missiles at the nuclear reactor in the Negev?

#Steve Starr

That's a good point. I've been trying to make it clear that nuclear power plants become targets in war—we've already seen that in Ukraine.

#Steve Starr

A nuclear power plant not only has the reactor, but also a spent fuel pool next to it where they store the used uranium rods. Those are incredibly radioactive, and if you hit a spent fuel pool, you'd release an enormous amount of radioactivity. Now, I don't know—Dimona—I've looked at pictures of it. I believe they have a lot of it underground, but it looked to me like the reactor was at ground level. I haven't been there yet, but yeah, I think that's a serious consideration.

I would say, though, at this point, you know, Dr. Postol stated that even after the 12-day war, he thought Iran would move forward, take that 450 kilograms of 60 percent enriched uranium, and go ahead and enrich it to 90 percent to make nuclear weapons. You might talk to him about that. I think the one person who was preventing that was the Ayatollah we killed, and there was a 26-year

fatwa against it. Well, I suspect his son might remove that fatwa. And there's also the issue of jihad—we're almost at a point where a global jihad could be declared against the West. Anyway, the situation is not good at all.

#Pascal

No, the situation is absolutely horrible. So the question is, where are the grown-ups in the room who should have every interest in de-escalating this—including, of course, the Pentagon?

#Steve Starr

You asked me, and I didn't give you a good, complete answer. I think it's possible that Iran would respond with nuclear weapons on hypersonic missiles. I don't think you can rule out the possibility that they've made them. And I don't—hopefully—people in Jerusalem and Washington are thinking that, too. But I don't know. Rational thought doesn't seem to enter into this. Iran demonstrated that they could penetrate U.S. and Israeli air defenses in the 12-day war. I mean, they hit all those bases with hypersonic missiles that we couldn't intercept.

We have the same problem in Ukraine. The Russian Zircons are coming through and smashing Ukrainian targets. What does it take to alert the leadership in the United States that their air defense systems don't work? I mean, that's why Dr. Postol's been on the air, ranting and raving too. But we're all frightened by this because—I don't mean to say he's ranting and raving, but he's trying to make the point that these systems are fraudulent. They can't be depended on. But here we are, depending on them. The radar's blown up, and they don't work anyway. So what comes next?

#Pascal

Somebody also made the—who told me that? Was it you, last week, who said that Iran actually still has about 19 diesel submarines? Yes, that are out there.

#Steve Starr

It wasn't me, but I believe that's probably correct. You know, the Chinese have an electronic warship that's so highly sophisticated it's probably giving real-time targeting information to the Iranians. And they probably have a submarine accompanying it. The U.S. has to be careful about targeting anything near that ship because if you blow up a Chinese naval vessel, then you've got another problem with China. So this is a complicated situation.

#Pascal

It is, but I mean, what we're learning right now—sad as it is—is that these wars, same with the war in Ukraine, are always moments that afterward bring some clarity about actual capability. Before the

war, we're all engaged in a guessing game with numbers and whatnot, and afterward, you know what one side can really do. So we know now that missile defense is a lovely dream. The most sophisticated missile defense system in the world—the three-tiered system in Israel—can basically be incapacitated and overwhelmed within a week. So, for purposes of air war, it's useless. And we know the same is true on the side of Iran, because the United States can strike basically any target at will.

So, same thing—both sides. And we learn that Iran, in fact, has massive capacity, and that even after two weeks of relentless bombardment, what we see in the videos from the strikes in the cities is only a fraction of everything that was hit before—throughout the country, all the tunnel entries, and so on, and the mobile missile launchers, and so forth. All of those were struck, but they were replaced. And Iran maintains the capacity to shoot and fire. So that assessment was correct: the U. S. is not able to incapacitate the missile and drone capability that Iran has. So we are at a moment of, you know, in a sense, total missile war on both sides.

#Steve Starr

We are. Well, think about Ukraine and how many missiles Russia's pumped into it over the last four years. They haven't won that war with an air war either. We didn't find all the Scud missiles in Iraq or the Gulf Wars—they kept pulling them out. And Iran is much more sophisticated. They've been preparing for this war for decades. We're not going to make them back down, and they'll keep pulling missiles out of tunnels and bombarding U.S., Israeli, and maybe Gulf targets, the way things are going.

#Pascal

Yeah, so the ability to build up underground bunkers... and actually, according to Professor Marandi, entire production facilities—he said even the factories where they build these things—are underground. So even if they deplete their stockpile, they can always make more. That's his point. I don't know how true that is.

#Steve Starr

If you look on YouTube—which I spend a lot of time doing—there are some pretty good videos of Iranian tunneling machines. I mean, Iran is a very sophisticated country. You know, if they have underground tunnels beneath the sea, I'm sure they have plenty of them in the mountains. We keep underestimating them. I think we've just gotten to the point where we believe our own propaganda in the West, no matter who we're facing. We're number one, right? We still think it's 1990, that the U.S. has the biggest army and the best military forces in the world, and that nobody can compete. Well, that's not the case at all. All you have to do is look at the radar installations that have been destroyed and all the U.S. military bases in the Gulf. I mean, we're leaving the Gulf, in a sense, because we're being driven out of it.

#Pascal

Yeah, that's not the objective of the Iranians, right? It's about driving the United States out and making it crystal clear to the Gulf countries that if you maintain your alliance and keep U.S. military assets on your soil, well, you're going to be bombarded. So you'd better take those away.

#Steve Starr

I wonder if Trump will figure out a way to declare victory and leave. You know, I mean, that's probably their best option at this point. I don't know how they'll manage to do that. But the real issue is more with Israel. Even if the U.S. tries to back out, I think for Israel this is a life-or-death struggle—for both Iran and Israel.

#Pascal

It is. But in a sense, if you want to avoid the nuclear scenario, something's got to give, right? The minimum Iran would have to do to avoid a nuclear strike is make it clear that it will not try to annihilate Israel, right? Because otherwise, Israel is at an existential level where, at some point, nuclear weapons, in a sense, would have to be used.

#Steve Starr

Well, there was some talk about Iran doing a nuclear test in the desert to show that they had nuclear weapons and to warn Israel. There are so many possible scenarios you can come up with. I really don't believe Iran would ever use a nuclear weapon unless they'd been attacked with one first.

#Pascal

I think so too, yeah.

#Steve Starr

But I think anything is possible if Israeli cities come under such sustained bombardment that they're basically being wrecked. And they're already in trouble now. I mean, they've hit port facilities, power plants, refineries. We don't know—Israel's got everything locked down so tight. You try to look on the internet and find some videos of what the skies over Israel have looked like the last few nights—you won't find any. I found a diagram from Ascentcom; they claim that every day the number of missile attacks from Iran on Israel has decreased, which could well be true. I also saw a video showing Hezbollah launching a massive strike of about 150 missiles into northern Israel last night. So, things are always changing there. But I think it's way too early to write off all the ballistic missiles that Iran has been manufacturing for the last 30 or 40 years.

#Pascal

Right. Right. Now, this would be another foolish thing to do. But then again, at the moment—especially in the news media—we just can't trust it. I mean, what we read in the media, we can be sure, is what people want us to know. They want us to know about this, and the rest doesn't really reach us. The interesting thing is that a couple of these attacks are so large and so devastating that they have to be reported—like the attacks on the radar infrastructure. That was widely reported. The attacks on the oil tanker, too. I mean, that also serves, of course, the purpose of scaring everybody: "Oh, look, Iran actually is really dangerous."

#Steve Starr

Well, you know, I haven't trusted the media for a long time. So thank God for channels like yours. I like The Duran, and, you know, there's NEMA. I mean, I look to those sources for news these days rather than Larry Johnson. But you can't just accept something because you see it as a headline in The Wall Street Journal or The New York Times. You have to ask first: why is that there, and what's the purpose? What do they want us to think now? Because it's the official narrative almost always—very rarely something else. Like you said, sometimes there are stories that slip through because the Democrats hate Trump enough that they'll publish stuff that goes against the "we're winning the war" narrative. But in general, you know, we're like mushrooms—we're kept in the dark and fed, you know, bullshit.

#Pascal

Kept molding around. Oh my. No, no, but again, like the fog of war—that's another thing I only realized with the Ukraine war. You know, we were so accustomed to the idea that, thanks to the internet, we had limitless, real-time access to information. And that's just not true. When war breaks out, the information stream seizes—or rather, the reliable information stream becomes highly... We're not seeing reports.

#Steve Starr

It tells you a lot too, because censorship by omission is just as important as, you know, falsifying stuff. I mean, if we were winning the war, we'd be seeing videos all over the place of how we're doing. But apparently, a lot of the planes and missiles the United States has bombed have just been drawings on runways.

#Pascal

Yeah, yeah, right, right. The Iranians actually, you know, again, this is another thing I think we learned—the Iranians prepared to be attacked. They prepared to be able to absorb it, again, with these fakes, these little balloon thingies. It's very smart, so smart. It's like you put all these fake

things on the ground, and then the U.S. shoots at those instead of the real ones. And they actually can't differentiate because the models are so good—these inflatable models. And again, the Iranian military doctrine, to me, just from looking at it from here, seems very clearly a second-strike capability doctrine. As in, anything you target, we will target back—and we can. You cannot take away our ability to second strike. So stop it. I think that was the strategy.

#Steve Starr

Dr. Postol showed some images the other day in one of his interviews where Iranian missiles were blasting out of the desert. There was a cloud of brown sand—the whole silo was covered over with it. It was completely invisible until the missile came shooting out of the sand. I mean, how do you target those? I don't think the United States—I'm sure we have great capabilities and have been looking for a long time—but I seriously doubt we know where all the missile cities are located.

#Pascal

It's kind of difficult to wrap our heads around this, but, you know, we've been living in the nuclear age for over 80 years. Nuclear technology is now nearly 100 years old. And we've been living in the satellite age for almost the same time—around 70 years, right? And Iran has had, at least since the revolution, since the '80s, since the war against Iraq, time to prepare for a war in which they would be under 100% surveillance—like surface surveillance. And they did prepare for that.

#Steve Starr

Well, satellites can see in great detail, but it's like focusing a microscope—you can't see everything all the time. And, you know, the missiles that come out of those tunnels are on mobile launchers. They can drive them wherever they want and then launch them. The point is, some of the more modern missiles they're starting to launch now use a different type of launcher than the earlier ones, the older variety. So just because we destroyed some launchers doesn't mean we destroyed the ones they're starting to bring out with the newer solid-fuel weapons that are hypersonic—ones you certainly wouldn't want to be on the receiving end of.

#Pascal

Right. And, you know, in a sense, the war that Iran is waging reminds me very much of the Swiss military strategy during the Second World War. Of course, we were not at war, but the strategy was a redoubt: the whole military retreats into the Alps, into the bunker network that was built throughout the mountains. Then you destroy your own infrastructure to make sure the attacking Germans, it was believed, would have no way of using the Alpine passes. And from there, you wage a war of resistance from the Alps. It seems to me that the strategy of the Iranians is very similar to that.

#Steve Starr

Well, speaking of bunkers, I saw an article on Zero Hedge a couple of days ago about a guy selling doomsday bunkers. He was quoted saying, "Oh yeah, a couple of the cabinet members are buying them from me. They're texting me, asking when they're going to be ready." No, I didn't find that particularly reassuring.

#Pascal

Nope, nope, nope, nope. Insane people. That's when you have insane people at the helm.

#Steve Starr

I've been talking about the environmental consequences of nuclear war for about 20 or 30 years now.

#Pascal

Yeah.

#Steve Starr

And that's something that's been completely omitted from arms control negotiations. You know, they just talk about how many warheads, and the Army likes to talk about blasts. They don't even—well, you know, Lynn Eden, Dr. Postle, and I wrote an article with Lynn Eden in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* that talked about the effects of a detonation of an 800-kiloton weapon above Manhattan.

#Pascal

Right.

#Steve Starr

But Lynn Eden pointed out that, in the study we based that on, the Army doesn't even consider thermal effects a primary concern because they're thought to be too variable. But a nuclear firestorm—an 800-kiloton warhead—on an average weather day would set about 150 square miles on fire instantly. And anything in that fire zone isn't going to survive, because the air temperatures rise above the boiling point of water. There are 300-mile-an-hour winds blowing toward the center because of the updraft that's created. And even if you're in a deep shelter, you're going to be cooked. So that's one nuclear weapon. You fight a war with hundreds or thousands of those, and you create a global stratospheric smoke layer from all the smoke that rises into the stratosphere.

There are peer-reviewed scientific studies published since 2009 and 2010 that haven't been successfully challenged, showing that about 150 million tons of smoke would block 70% of the sunlight in the Northern Hemisphere and 35% in the Southern Hemisphere. Within a few weeks, daily temperatures would fall below freezing for up to three years in the Northern Hemisphere. So you can't grow food, and basically most people would starve to death in a scenario like that. So why isn't that the main concern? That should be the primary issue in any discussion of nuclear weapons and nuclear war. Yet we still haven't seen any leaders of the nuclear-armed states acknowledge this or show any willingness to discuss it publicly.

#Pascal

Well, let's take a little bit of hope in the fact that after two weeks of war in Iran and after four years of war in Ukraine, we actually haven't seen the use of nuclear weapons. There are scenarios people talk about—using, you know, just a little tactical nuclear weapon, just a little one to send a message—but even that we haven't seen. So there is a little bit of hope, but honestly, I don't have much more left.

#Steve Starr

I have hope because there are lots of good people in this world. And there are a lot of people who understand—you know, they passed the treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons. The nuclear-weapon states boycotted it, but over 50 nations have signed it. And people understand this around the world, but we can't get through to the small clique of leaders and the military elite who seem to be making all the decisions while disregarding public opinion everywhere. But, you know, we can't give up on this. We have to fight. We have to make our voices heard.

#Pascal

No, we can't give up on it. The problem is that, at the moment, nuclear weapons are about the most undemocratic thing in the world. By design, they're meant to be deployed by about nine people—the leaders of each of these countries. The systems are built so that the decision, the button-pushing power, stays with those nine people. The fallout, of course, will be borne by eight billion. So this really is about the most undemocratic thing in the world. But, well, it is what it is.

#Steve Starr

Both the Russian and American presidents are accompanied by the nuclear briefcase when they're out of the Kremlin or the White House. It's an automated device carried by a military officer. Even if they go to the Vatican, it's right there with them. They can open it up, and within less than a minute, they can choose between ordering the use of one nuclear weapon or thousands. They give the permission order for the launch to take place, and then it takes less than 15 minutes to carry those orders out.

So they set the system up so that it can be triggered with great ease, although there are supposedly a lot of safeguards to prevent that. And so far, they have prevented accidental or unauthorized use. But it's hard for me to sleep at night sometimes. I know all this stuff, and I just think, how do we get through to people, to warn them about this danger that hangs over all our families, all our lives? But it's there. Annie Jacobsen wrote a book called *Nuclear War Scenario*, and I highly recommend it to anyone who wants to learn more about nuclear weapons.

#Pascal

Yeah, I saw that. Good. It's sad that we have to stop again here at the doomsday scenario, but it's the world we live in.

#Steve Starr

It's hard to stop me from bringing that up.

#Pascal

We have to bring it up. We have to bring it up. It's just sad that we live in that world. Anyway, Steve, thank you very much for your time. People who want to read more from you should, of course, look up all of your papers and so on.

#Steve Starr

I have a website—nuclearfamine.net or [.org](http://nuclearfamine.org)—and you can find a lot of information there.

#Pascal

Go and find Stephen Starr at nuclearfamine.net. Thank you very much for your time today. Well, thank you very much.