

# The US already LOST the Naval War | Commodore Steve Jermy

The War against Iran is getting worse and worse for the United States. Its navy can't even get close to the "theater" of war and the inadequacy of its naval assets is now out in the open. My guest today, UK navy officer (Commodore) Steve Jermy explains the various parts of the US maritime quagmire. Support us on Substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> Shop and Donations: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com>

## #Pascal

Welcome back, everybody. This is Pascal Lottaz from Neutrality Studies. I'm a professor at Kyoto University, and I'm talking today again with Commodore Stephen Jeremy, a retired British Navy officer. Steve, welcome back.

## #Steve Jermy

Good to be back, Pascal. I've been listening to some of your recent podcasts—some particularly fascinating, especially the one about the origins of the neocons and how Zionism and American Christian Zionism played into that. I found it absolutely fascinating.

## #Pascal

It's a lot of things actually coming together right now. The Zionist topic will come up again in a day or two on another podcast. But with you, I think we should really talk about the military implications of the Iran war. Later, maybe a little bit about what's happening at sea, since you're a captain and were in the British Navy. But let's start with all the military things that happened on the ground—how Iran was able to destroy a large part, if not all, of the U.S. radar system in the region. What does that mean? And if you were there, if you were responsible for this, how would you interpret it? I mean, this must be frightening for the U.S. military personnel on the ground, right?

## #Steve Jermy

Yeah, definitely. What this is about is what we call, in air defense, layered defense. As I said, one of my jobs in the Navy was to be the captain of an air defense destroyer, Pascal. Within that job, you're actually what's called the anti-air warfare coordinator. It's a defensive role. But the key thing with air defense is that the general principle is one of layered defense. For example, if you take an aircraft carrier, the way you would defend it would be to have pickets out—ships with long-range radars positioned at some distance. With their radars, they can see quite a long way. Then, as you get

closer, the defense actually increases. The point of having the pickets, as we called them, is that they give you much more time. And time allows you to allocate your resources.

## **#Pascal**

Sorry, what is a picket?

## **#Steve Jermy**

Yeah, a picket is a vessel that's positioned up-threat—that is, toward where you expect the threat to come from. What it does is give you much more time. This started in the Pacific War, really, Pascal. During that war, the Americans began to develop ships with radar that could alert the carriers before the attacks arrived. That meant that if they were, say, 40 miles up-threat—toward where they thought the threat would be coming—they'd get another 20 minutes or so of warning. That allowed them to launch their own combat air patrols and be ready to intercept those aircraft before they reached the heart of the carrier force, if you see what I mean.

That principle generally holds. The way I think about these radars that the Americans have had destroyed is that they're usually what I'd call up-threat—particularly from Israel. They provide advance warning so that those on the ground can respond. So it's about early warning for people on the ground, but it's also about helping allocate air defense resources. As you start to see the air picture—where the missiles are coming from and which ones are the highest threat—you can assign them to different weapon systems.

But if those eyes are gone—and they are gone, from what I hear—then suddenly you're in a much more difficult position. Not only do you get very little warning for your people on the ground, but the effectiveness of your air defense missiles is much less—uh, much less effective—because the missiles are coming in with such short notice. It's very difficult to allocate them efficiently. There's an issue of numbers as well: if the number of missiles coming in is high, it becomes extremely difficult. So I would say, at the moment, the American bases are close to naked, and that must be an extremely uncomfortable feeling.

It's not completely so because, of course, what will be happening, Pascal, is that the Americans will have AWACS aircraft—that's airborne early warning and control aircraft. They haven't been targeted, and it would be difficult for the Iranians to target them. Those will probably be operating about a hundred miles back, I'd guess, over the key areas. They have very large radars—people may remember what they look like, with that big sort of spaceship dome on top, a circular dome, kind of like a saucer shape. They provide long-range radar coverage, probably out to about four or five hundred miles, and that again allows you to allocate missiles and systems.

So there is some coverage in that system. But again, what we'll need to do is keep one of those aircraft airborne 24/7. It's a continual rotation of that aircraft, because you can't let your guard down

and create a window where there's no radar at all. So it's not a completely disastrous situation, but they're much, much worse off. And again, what I don't know is the capability of the AWACS aircraft against ballistic missiles and certainly hypersonic missiles, which are a very demanding threat. So it's a much worse situation for the Americans on the ground. And I'm sad that they've lost people, but not surprised.

## **#Pascal**

Why did they not foresee that? I mean, I wonder—aren't these obvious targets that would be hit first? Did they have their missile defense systems in place and think those would be enough to protect the radars?

## **#Steve Jermy**

I think there are two answers to that question. It's a question I've asked myself. I mean, when I was originally asked whether I thought this campaign would happen—about three or four days before it actually started—I said it was about fifty-fifty. But if I had to bet, I would've bet that it wouldn't happen. My bet was based on the fact that I thought people would be very unlikely to actually enter the campaign, given the very high risks it would entail and the very few benefits I could see. I'm afraid I was wrong. They took the decision to take the risk. What I don't know is whether they calculated the risks against their own air defense radars or completely missed it. It's not impossible that they missed it, and it seems to me they've missed other things as well.

They haven't understood the nature of the campaign properly. So it's one of those two answers. If they did miss it, well, that's not a competent way of doing strategic thinking, I'm afraid. If they accepted it as a risk, then it's a very high one—and not just something that will hurt them, but actually evidence of a kind of hubris, I think, probably within the political establishment. They believe that, notwithstanding what they're being told by their military advisers, America will prevail and is, as Trump often says, the greatest fighting force the world has ever seen. That isn't true. But if that's the way you're thinking, you can imagine people being seduced by their own political narrative into taking a decision that I think is ultimately going to be catastrophic for America's position in the world.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, if I had to guess, I'd think some of the people who must have been most shocked by this decision are probably the military personnel on the ground over there, who understood what it meant for them even before the first missiles were hitting Tehran. You know, if we're now in a situation where the United States and Israel are reduced to, let's call it, emergency radar coverage—very expensive and nowhere near as effective as the systems they had on the ground—if we're at that point, and we also see where the U.S. Navy actually parks its ships, right?

Yeah, the aircraft carrier being tucked away safely, like in the Mediterranean—not in the Gulf at all, right? And the distance the United States is putting between its naval assets... and also the idea from Donald Trump yesterday—and we're speaking today on March 16th—yesterday he pitched this idea: "Hey, how about China, Japan, France, everybody—you come, bring your ships, and go reopen the Strait of Hormuz. You know, why don't you do this? And we'll help big time," in all caps. It seems they're very much aware that these naval assets are in real danger if they come too close to Iran, aren't they?

## **#Steve Jermy**

Yeah, I think that's right.

## **#Steve Jermy**

One component is a completely fundamental shift in the way we're thinking about warfare. Suddenly, because of the difficulty we have in intercepting ballistic and hypersonic missiles, the advantage has shifted to those who possess those capabilities. Now, if you look at the American Armed Forces, they're very much an air-heavy and maritime-heavy force, with a relatively small army compared to the size and expenditure of the American defense budget. But what we're seeing is that those air and maritime forces are now much less deployable—they have to be used with much more caution.

And what that means is that the ability of the Americans to exercise power across the world is significantly reduced. I think if you take the two aircraft carriers—I don't know where the Ford is. The Ford was, I think, in the Mediterranean, and she may have moved into the Red Sea. I'm not 100% sure, but I did hear that she was moving to the Red Sea. It seemed to me that she was in the Mediterranean largely to provide a defensive capability for Israel—so her destroyers and their systems, along with her own aircraft, would provide defensive air cover over Israel. I suspect that was the initial thinking.

I had heard, though, that they were going to deploy her into the Red Sea because of concerns about the Saudi Arabian pipelines and their exit into the Red Sea. That would be entirely logical if so, but I honestly don't know whether they've done that yet. The Red Sea isn't necessarily going to be an easy place for them to operate, because the last time an aircraft carrier group was there, they eventually decided to declare victory and retreat. It wouldn't surprise me if they're in the same situation, because the Houthis have done this before. So we'll see—maybe the Indian Ocean next.

But again, as you say, I think operating at a distance, we won't know. I'm sure the Iranians know, because they'll have intelligence from both the Chinese and the Russians about where that group is operating. But I'd be surprised if it's operating much closer than about 400 miles south of the coast of southern Iran. So we're in a very different situation now. It's ironic, I think, that Trump and Netanyahu, having created the war and the situation where the straits were almost closed, are now

actually asking for help to open the strait. I think it's highly unlikely that any allies will accede to that request because of the risks. And I think the risks of actually trying to open the straits—let alone get a carrier or an amphibious group as far as Karg Island—are such that I just cannot think the White House will want to see American ships struck.

It'll be very interesting to see how that plays out, because, of course, with the Strait closed—and I think possibly for an extended period—the consequences for the world economy are really extremely challenging. I think they're potentially catastrophic, because I can see no sign that Iran is about to back down. And I think, again, it's an example of the White House and indeed the broader American neocon establishment completely misunderstanding not only the nature of the war, but the nature of their opponent and the way that opponent is thinking. I mean, the Iranians think of this as an existential war. But it's even more complicated than that, because, of course, they see it as a war for—if you think about their theology—they see it as a war for the right.

They see it as a war for justice over the oppressor. And this goes back as far as the Battle of Karbala in 680 A.D., which the Iranians—and indeed all Shia—commemorate every year. Without getting into the details of that, you need to understand that sort of logic, because otherwise you tend to think that your opponent is thinking in what you would call a rational way, and you tend to apply things like game theory. I mean, clearly the Iranians are thinking in a rational way, but you have to think about that rationality and link it to their religious beliefs and how that plays out. So I think we're in a very difficult situation in this war. I can't see any easy off-ramp for the White House.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, I think one of the biggest lessons for me over the last two weeks is that the Iranians have created a system of governance—especially military governance—where every single person, from foot soldier to Ayatollah, is replaceable. And they're willing to do that because they apparently have no problem with martyrdom. They say so. Up to the Ayatollah, that's something we just don't do in the West. We don't think that the general or the president, and so on, are easily replaceable, right? Losing the commander-in-chief is a huge, huge thing. But for them, it seems they've come to terms with this and say, "No, anyone is replaceable, period." And they've built a system that can defend under all and any circumstances and fire back—a second-strike capability, you know, a very unconventional second-strike capability.

But what does this do now? We should talk about the global economy, but I'm still very interested in your thoughts about the Navy. You know, I'm not entirely sure if it's still the case, but a couple of years ago the largest air force in the world was the U.S. Air Force, and the second largest was the U.S. Navy—just because they have so many airplanes on those ships and all those aircraft carriers. However, first, is an aircraft carrier actually at risk of being sunk? I mean, what would it take to sink one? And secondly, Rainer Rupp made this point on my channel: even if you can't sink it, if you just manage to damage the tarmac enough, the thing's basically useless because those planes can't go anywhere anymore. Do you share that assessment or not?

## #Steve Jermy

The short answer is, I don't know. I mean, the thing an aircraft carrier has that a land base doesn't is the ability to move—and that makes it much more difficult to target. So I'd be surprised. There's been a lot of talk about the Lincoln group being hit, but I'd be surprised if that's the case. I've seen no evidence, and I've been looking for it. The issue, though, isn't so much drones, because you can provide layered air defense in an aircraft carrier group, and it has everything it needs to do that. The real challenge is defending against ballistic and hypersonic missiles. And the fundamental question—which I'd love to hear Ted Postol talk about—is whether you can do late-stage guidance for a hypersonic or ballistic missile against a moving target like an aircraft carrier.

There are sort of three broad stages, Pascal. So, if you're launching against a surface ship—or any kind of ship, really—the first stage is when you launch it. You send it off in a general direction, based on intelligence or reconnaissance information about where the ship is. So you send it off on a latitude and longitude. Depending on the missile, you then provide what's called mid-course guidance information. As the vessel you're targeting moves, you adjust and update the missile so it's still heading in roughly the right direction. Then the final stage—maybe in the last ten miles or even the last two miles, but relatively close—is when you provide final homing guidance so that it actually locks onto the ship.

That can be done generally—often it's done by radar. The Exocet missile, for example, has radar in the final stages of the missile. That's an old missile, but it actually homes in on a radar target. What we used to do in those days was put up radar decoys—it's called chaff—and that would hopefully decoy the missile. But the question is, do the ballistic missiles the Iranians have include terminal-phase guidance, and do the hypersonic missiles have terminal-phase guidance? I don't know—that's the short answer. What I do know is it's very difficult to actually target if you don't have that terminal-stage guidance, in which case all vessels would be free.

But actually, it's a very, very delicate call because, you know, if you were to lose a carrier—I don't think one of these missiles would sink a carrier—but it could do enough damage to take it out of combat. You know, these ships are big. They have armored flight decks. They're not as well armored as they used to be, but they can still take significant damage. What that also means, though, Pascal, is that it's not just about the carriers—and a lot of people focus on the carriers—it's about all surface ships: amphibious forces, replenishment forces. So what it means is that any vessel, not just a carrier, if these missiles can be terminally guided, is under threat.

That, in turn, has a very important impact on a country that actually tends to deploy its air power from carriers at sea, or its power from amphibious forces, because it changes things completely. It means that, if this is the case, the American military—which uses air power from land bases and strategic bombardment power from sea bases, called aircraft carriers or amphibious ships—is now much more vulnerable. It will be much more difficult for the American armed forces to exercise what

we call power projection in the way they used to, with the degree of safety they once had. So we're in very interesting times—difficult times, I think.

## **#Pascal**

You already started talking about the Strait of Hormuz and, of course, the whole Gulf area there. It seems pretty clear—the Iranians are saying it out loud, from their government representatives down to people like Mohammad Marandi on my channel. They're saying, "We want the Americans out. They must be gone. Their capacity to threaten us from the Gulf region must be withdrawn. Either they withdraw by themselves, or we will destroy them." Do you think this is becoming more and more of a realistic goal for the Iranians—to actually force the U.S. to completely withdraw, maybe back to Israel or somewhere else, but leave the region?

## **#Steve Jermy**

I do think it's a realistic goal, Pascal. In a way, there's an interesting symmetry between this campaign and the Russia-Ukraine war. I mean, when the Russia-Ukraine war started—if you look at the Istanbul Accords—the Russian demands were, well, they now seem not nearly as extensive as they are today. It was just a tragedy for Ukraine. But of course, as it became clear that the West was going to fight through NATO, the Russians increased their demands to meet their own security objectives. And I think we're seeing something similar here. I've always felt that the Iranians would succeed if they survived—and indeed, I think they have survived.

And so I think they will succeed because, of course, the objective—it's difficult to actually work out what the American objective is. But the objective, I think some people would call it regime change. I'm consciously trying not to use that expression because it's value-laden. I'm instead using the expression "government overthrow." So the Americans were seeking to overthrow a government that was recognized as legitimate everywhere else in the world except in the West. So I think that's what their objective was. And it seems clear that they're not going to be able to achieve that objective. Whereas the Ukrainians are now setting out demands that go beyond survival—they want the end of sanctions, they want reparations, they want the Americans gone from their bases.

And there was a fourth one, which I forget, but that's at a sort of elevated level. And I think what they've seen, I suspect, is the success of their closure of the straits and how that's impacting the world economy, which gives them a real foot on the neck not just of the Americans, but of the whole world economy. So I think yes, it is, because the problem the Americans have is logistics and ammunition. But I also think the other problem is that, increasingly in Washington—and we're starting to see this in the American press—there's real concern about this other war. There seems to be a lack of support there.

Figures seem to show that between 60 and 70 percent of Americans are against the war. And I suspect that as they start to see some American casualties, some of this is bound to, well, some of

the problems we've had—and some of the problems with the American systems and the loss of American bases—are bound to actually filter out. I think, increasingly, Americans will start to see this as a strategic disaster. To me, it looks worse than Vietnam, because in Vietnam, you know, it was relatively contained. But this is very, very different, because... if I were in the Gulf Arab states, I'd now be thinking long and hard about my relationship with America.

And I'd be wondering how else I might get my security guarantees. And if I were looking at it from purely rational reasons, I'd probably say my best security guarantees would come from a combination of the Russians and the Chinese rather than the Americans. I don't know whether they'd go that far, but if I were asked to advise them, I'd say I'd talk to both those entities. So if that were to happen, it would be a game changer. But the issue, I think, is that unless the straits are opened, there's no sign that the Iranians are seeking to close the war.

Indeed, I've always felt that they've been ready for an extended campaign. I was thinking at least six months. I've heard Alistair Crooke say two years. And, you know, I can't think there's any possibility that the American people—and indeed large elements of the American government—would be able to sustain a two-year campaign, especially with the catastrophic impact on the global economy. What's sad is that we're not yet seeing, with one or two honorable exceptions such as Spain, Europeans and others in the West starting to put pressure on the Americans to bring this campaign to a conclusion.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, can we maybe talk about that a little bit? I mean, in the very first hours of the war, Keir Starmer in the UK announced that they were very shocked and that they weren't going to give any base access to the US to do this. But within 24 hours, they said, well, by now everything has changed because Iran is indiscriminately attacking its neighbors, and that the UK would open its bases for defensive actions. Until now, we're two weeks in, but that's still the jargon—"defensive actions." And the Europeans are all behind the idea that in a war of aggression, you can have a defensive side, which is, well, fair enough. And of course, the Americans can now again use Diego Garcia and other places. We've seen pictures of US bombers taking off directly from the UK. Probably Ramstein in Germany is being used as well to implement this. What's your assessment of general European support and this, in my view, nonsense jargon of "defensive actions" launched from European assets and soil?

## **#Steve Jermy**

I think I've heard the American expression, "they're trying to ride two horses with one backside." And it seems to me that this is exactly the case. It's a very contorted argument. I can see why they're doing it, because, of course, there's the so-called special relationship with the Americans and the need—or the desire—to keep the Americans engaged in Ukraine.

## **#Pascal**

I think that's over now, but they're still trying to do it.

## **#Steve Jermy**

But on the other hand, I'm sure they see the catastrophic consequences the campaign is having in the Gulf, and already in energy prices worldwide. So I think they're trying to ride two horses, and it's a very difficult thing to do. The argument, I think, is contorted. I suppose it's better than outright support, but actually, if I were advising any government across Europe, my advice would be that this is the time to draw back, because it's not in our national security interests to be seen as visibly supporting America—and, as a consequence of that support, extending the war.

Because the longer the war goes on, the more catastrophic the impact on the global economy. So I think this would be a time to draw back. They've just accepted the American position, and this hasn't always historically been the case. A good example I always trot out is Vietnam, where the Americans tried to persuade the British to join in, and Harold Wilson, who was then prime minister, said no—and he was right to do so. I think nobody regrets his decision not to go into Vietnam. People do regret Tony Blair's decision to side with the Americans in Iraq.

And again, there's another example of, I think, slightly contorted thinking, which is that the special relationship trumps everything. That "trump" wasn't meant to be the pun it actually is. But if the special relationship trumps everything, it shows a lack of clear thinking about a country's future—its true strategic interests. And I think sometimes you don't necessarily damage a special relationship by saying no on occasion. It isn't really a special relationship, of course, because the special relationship America has is with Israel.

And sometimes, by saying no, I think it's actually a good thing to do. It can strengthen the relationship because it will be respected—not necessarily in this current situation, but elsewhere. Also, it's something that will play into American politics if Europeans are unwilling to support this. And that's where I think the Spanish government deserves credit. I think they've done the right thing, and they've done the right thing for their country. "Congratulate" is probably too strong a word, but it's the sort of thing I would have done and would have recommended in their circumstances, had I been asked what's best for Spain's national security interests.

## **#Pascal**

But how do you see that now, with the possible ways forward? Because the Europeans are at the point where the Belgian prime minister just announced, "Look, guys, we cannot defeat the Russians. Maybe we need to talk to them." Of course, Fico in Slovakia said so. Hungary says so too, although

Hungary is now just a couple of weeks away from a very important election. But this war with Iran is already drawing a lot of money into the region. People are talking about around 12 billion by now, within just two weeks.

So that's roughly a billion US dollars per day. This draws in—or rather, draws away—assets from Ukraine. It also pulls assets from the Pacific. I mean, the fact that the US had to pack up their air defense system in South Korea is a huge embarrassment, especially for the South Koreans. It kind of shows, first, where the priorities are, and second, that they're running out of systems if you have to pack up an expensive one in South Korea just to bring it into harm's way and have it destroyed somewhere in the Middle East.

I mean, in West Asia, that doesn't send a very good signal, right, about your capabilities. Do you have any information about where we are with the replenishing of these weapons? I don't know if anyone is actually able to monitor how much has been fired over time and verify that independently. But if you have any numbers—whether it's increased or decreased, or what's still there in terms of assets—it would be very interesting to know.

## **#Steve Jermy**

Yeah, I don't have the best numbers. If I were to advise, I'd go to Larry Johnson's website, Sonar 21. Larry's a very, very good analyst on these sorts of things. I don't think anybody knows for sure. But what we're looking at is something that's fundamental. I said the key components of military power were energy—because you need it to run your tanks and everything—and industrial capacity. I made a mistake in that article, which I'm going to correct in a future one, because the third key component is the ability to think strategically. It's clear we don't have that in the West. We're seeing not only a lack of industrial capacity but also very poor value for money from what is spent. America is a very good example of that—it spends as much as the next, I want to say seven, but it might be thirteen nations put together.

And yet it has an army that's about a quarter the size of Russia's and probably a sixth the size of China's. It has a navy that's now about the same size, although it has more aircraft carriers than the Chinese. So we're getting poor value for money from our spending. And again, it makes me think about what's really going on in our system. As I come back to Michael Hudson and the difference between financial capitalism and industrial capitalism—that's a hole we can probably step out of for now. But I think we're getting poor value for money, and that's being demonstrated in this war. I don't think the Europeans have necessarily picked this up, but it's bound to have an impact on the Russia-Ukraine war, because the American focus is now completely on this war, with very little interest elsewhere.

And of course, the key player now—or a potential key player—in bringing this war to a close is Russia. So it doesn't surprise me at all that Trump has actually phoned Putin. It sounds like they had a fairly sober discussion. Russia could be a player in bringing this war to a close because I very

much doubt the Iranians are going to listen to the Americans. I mean, you sort of think, why would they? Every time they've tried to negotiate with the Americans, they've been attacked. I think the most plausible people to actually mediate some sort of conclusion to this war would be the Russians. Now, Russia is probably the great beneficiary of the war—and indeed, the Russian economy—not that it was doing badly.

And so what that also means is that the Russian economy is going strong, and the chances of the Europeans sanctioning Russia to the table are even less than they already were. But actually, it's also in China's interest that the war be brought to a close. So I think the two ideal mediators would be China and Russia. And, of course, it's difficult for the Americans to invite Russia in to mediate this war while at the same time providing support and intelligence to Ukraine and the Europeans. So I think it's about time the Europeans start to think about this and say, OK, this war's over. We need to get out of it in Ukraine and work with whoever can help us persuade the Americans to bring the Iranian war to a close.

## **#Pascal**

And again, it would be kind of an epic form of karma if, after one year of the United States pretending to be an uninvolved third party trying to mediate between Ukraine and Russia, it ended up begging Russia to be an uninvolved intermediary between Iran and them. Or if that's just what would happen—even if they don't beg for it—but that's what would naturally happen in order for the United States to somehow save face. Because it is also a bit about that, isn't it?

Like the mess that Donald Trump maneuvered himself into—also through all of his speech acts and making absolute maximalist demands from the very first day, declaring that everything has been destroyed while they're still being hammered—and obviously, um, struggling very badly with containing the military potential of Iran. I mean, it's just quite an insane level of losing face here after only two weeks, when after two weeks you're supposed to be at the height of your strength, and so on. And if we think about how this all went down in Iraq, and the comparison to that, and also the—I mean, you mentioned Tony Blair, right? Who is now sitting on the Board of Peace. I mean, this Board of Peace project is probably now in pieces, because a lot of states that were supposed to be there and sit on it are now under attack as a direct consequence of this. And it's a huge embarrassment. I mean, what are your thoughts on that one?

## **#Steve Jermy**

Yeah, I think... I think we know that history will treat Trump and Netanyahu badly, but I think it's actually worse than that. I think this will be looked back on as the worst foreign policy miscalculation—not just since the Second World War, but throughout American history.

## **#Pascal**

It's kind of ironic that this is happening on the 250th birthday of the nation.

## **#Steve Jermy**

Yeah, it is. And I think the miscalculation—260 years, right?

## **#Pascal**

Sorry, 250.

## **#Steve Jermy**

I think it will be looked on as that. The issue, I think, is that it's very difficult to see what road the White House might try to navigate, or what plausible reason it might try to follow. The danger, of course, is that it will seek to escalate. But again, the whole campaign has the same look as what happened in Vietnam with Operation Rolling Thunder—the use of incredible firepower to actually achieve nothing, as it turned out. But that was, in many ways, bound by the thinking of the Americans at the time, which was based on game theory. And that's not the way to think when you're dealing with a sophisticated, theologically based government like Iran's. You've got to understand how they're seeing this.

And I've got no sign whatsoever from within the White House that anybody is. What I'm seeing are numbers from EXIF—exactly the same kind of thing we saw in Rolling Thunder. There was a very good book called *\*In Retrospect\** by Robert McNamara, in which he explained how they started to enumerate things. We were talking about body counts and things like that. It made no difference to the campaign outcome. It is, indeed, part of American society. I don't think it's a bad thing or a good thing—it's quite a good thing in business—but you can't just enumerate things and assume that because you've dropped a number of bombs, that's a good key performance indicator. The key performance indicator is success, and we see no sign of success.

I think it's really something where I wonder how this is going to play out within the Beltway. It wouldn't surprise me if there are significant concerns there—in fact, I'd be astonished if there aren't. The question isn't necessarily how the Americans extract themselves, but what happens in the White House, and whether those in the Beltway who are starting to think not only about the midterms but about America's governance in general—whether they think the Trump White House is capable of extracting itself from this war. And if not, again, I wonder, if they judge that it isn't capable of doing so, what might be done.

I think they've passed the stage of impeachment based on the War Powers Act. But I do wonder whether we might see a release of all the Epstein files, and what might fall out of that. That wouldn't surprise me much, Pascal. But we know already—I mean, we think we know, though not for sure—that there are significant indications that both Vance and Gabbard are very uncomfortable with the

way things are going. And I suspect they're not on their own. So, one way or another, I think it's difficult to see how this plays out. Ironically, we've now got a war that's existential for Israel, existential for the Iranians, and existential for the Trump White House.

## **#Pascal**

Which is why a lot of people are really scared about the potential for a nuclear escalation, right? That either Israel, or the United States, or Israel with the OK from the United States, might actually start using nukes to intimidate the Iranians into giving up. Do you see that danger as well?

## **#Steve Jermy**

I do see it as a danger. Again, I'd just like to hope that's something the Americans would prevent. I don't know whether they can prevent it. But I also don't think—and this is the irony—I don't think it would change the campaign. I don't think the Iranians would be intimidated. This is a war, a theological war of existential nature to the Iranians. And I think the only thing it would do is make Israel and the United States even more pariah states than they're already becoming because of the way the war has been conducted. So I'd just like to hope there will be some common-sense discussions somewhere within the White House or the Beltway that might actually advise or prevent people from creating an even greater catastrophe than the one we're already in.

## **#Pascal**

And maybe just in the last five minutes or so, from your knowledge about the bases in the region and the military assets there, how long do you think the U.S. can actually hold out? Because at this point, it looks as though they're the ones under greater danger of being wiped out—in the sense of their installations being destroyed. How many assets are there, really? And can they be taken out by Iran? Or is there a point at which, after they've been struck so many times, the Iranians can keep launching new missiles at these installations, but it still won't get rid of the personnel or the basic capacities in the bunkers and so on?

## **#Steve Jermy**

I think the thing with airbases—what we're really talking about—is that it's not so much about suppressing the runway as it is about suppressing the equipment and the people. Because what you operate from airbases is aircraft. And that's very difficult. It's relatively straightforward to damage aircraft, and even if you don't destroy them completely, you can damage them enough that they're no longer combat-ready. A really good example of this was when I was in Afghanistan—oh, it must have been 2005—and we were there with the British Chief of Defence Staff. We had Harriers on that base, and two of them had been non-combat.

One of them didn't look like it had been destroyed, but it had—and both had been taken out by a simple Chinese missile fired from the mountains near Kandahar. The shrapnel caused all that damage. So the real issue there is keeping your aircraft safe. And I think if you can't keep them safe, then you have to pull them back. What I don't know—but what does seem to be the case—is that the Iranians are now starting to move to their more powerful, more capable missiles, both ballistic and hypersonic, and some of those appear to have quite devastating effects.

One of the hypersonic missiles divides into about 80 separate projectiles, and if each of those projectiles is around 20 kilograms—that's roughly the same size as the bursting charge of a Second World War battleship shell. That's the explosive part of the device. So they have the potential, I'd say, to do catastrophic damage to aircraft that are still on those bases. I wouldn't be surprised if we see those aircraft pulling back. I'm also not surprised that we're operating aircraft from places like Cyprus rather than from bases on the western side of the Gulf.

## **#Pascal**

If they do that—if they start firing projectiles from Cyprus at Iran—I mean, they're making Cyprus a direct target for the Iranians.

## **#Steve Jermy**

I completely agree with you. I'm not at all surprised that Cyprus has been targeted. Yeah, so I've got five minutes like you. I'm not at all surprised that Cyprus has been targeted, and it wouldn't surprise me if it's targeted again in the future. So far, so good. But actually, the key point about Cyprus is that it can't be defended against ballistic or hypersonic missiles. So, watch this space. I'd be extremely nervous operating aircraft there—it's more difficult for them, with more stages of warning.

But actually, it introduces lots of complications in terms of how you operate. If you're using aircraft for offensive purposes, it makes things much more difficult—you've got much farther to go. But it's not just a question of attacks from Iran; there's also the potential threat from Hezbollah. So again, it wouldn't surprise me at all if Hezbollah decided to target Cyprus. And that's a very different issue, because Lebanon is so much closer to Cyprus. If I were the British, I'd be quite worried about those bases in Cyprus.

## **#Pascal**

A lot of things to be very worried about—like bases suddenly becoming a liability. Well, that's the reality we live with now. Steve, if people want to follow you, where should they go? Is there a place where you publish your analysis?

## **#Steve Jermy**

Yeah, I do. I have a Substack. But actually, by the time we have our next talk, I may be in a better position, because I'm just setting up the Substack. It's not in very good shape at the moment, so I wouldn't want to promote it yet. It's called \*Morgello's Power from the Sea\*, but I'll be changing the name of the Substack. I'm also launching a YouTube channel after Easter, so that'll be the time to direct people in the right direction, Pascal. Very good. Thank you.

## **#Pascal**

Very good. And we'll talk again later, when all of this is set up, so we can let people know where to find you. Everybody, keep an eye out for Steve Jeremy's Substack and YouTube channel, which are coming soon. Steve, thank you very much for your time today.

## **#Steve Jermy**

Keep up the good work, Pascal.

## **#Pascal**

Thank you.