Theodore Postol: Iran Already Has Nuclear Deterrent to Israeli Nuclear Strike

MIT Professor and Pentagon advisor Ted Postol explains the extent to which the quantity and quality of Iranian missiles and drones were underestimated, and the consequences of this miscalculation. Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: https://glenndiesen.substack.com/ X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: https://www.patreon.com/glenndiesen Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glenndiesen Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: https://gofund.me/09ea012f Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL

#Glenn

Welcome back. We are joined today by Theodor Postol, a professor of science, technology, and national security policy at MIT. He's an expert in nuclear weapons delivery systems, missiles, and missile defense, and has worked as an advisor at the Pentagon. Thank you again for coming back on. We spoke after the U.S. and Israel launched their first surprise attack on Iran back in June of 2025. At that point, you mentioned that the Iranians probably have enough nuclear material to build at least ten nuclear weapons, and that they're already a nuclear threshold state. So it almost seems foolish, as you argued then, not to develop a nuclear deterrent, given that the U.S. and Israel will be back.

#Theodore Postol

They don't even need to develop a nuclear deterrent. They already have the materials. Let me just—well, let me explain a bit, if that's okay—what they actually have. Let's talk about what they have, how they could use it, and what it might look like if they retaliated after an Israeli nuclear attack on Tehran. Given what we've seen so far in terms of Israeli and Iranian behavior, my guess is that the first to use nuclear weapons—if they are used—would be the Israelis. They've been far more reckless and aggressive than the Iranians. That's my guess.

The point I think is important for your audience to understand—and I hope there are many Israelis listening—is that an Israeli nuclear attack on Iran can be retaliated against. The Iranians would be able to do it, even if they haven't yet built nuclear weapons, because the time between deciding to go ahead and actually building them is very short. Remember, I just showed you those tunnels, which are everywhere, and I'll show you equipment that could easily fit in those tunnels and be used. My guess is that there's already a lot of this kind of equipment in tunnels that may or may not have been used to build a final nuclear weapon. But they don't have to have taken that final step.

They could be following the edict of Ayatollah Khomeini that they should not build nuclear weapons, and just have this equipment sitting there. But the edict also says that if Iran is attacked and its existence is in doubt—under threat—then it would be justified, according to that edict, to use nuclear weapons. So they're in a position… if they have this equipment—and they do have it. Let me just—shall I take a minute or two?—and then I'll tell you what they can do, what the consequences of this would be. That's important as well. All right, so why should anyone understand that the Iranians almost certainly have the ability to build nuclear weapons?

This is because they have this 60% enriched uranium hexafluoride. I'll show you what that is. These are the canisters—here's one of uranium hexafluoride. It's got about 50 kilograms of material, and it' s very rugged, maybe a meter in length, so not very big. The total weight is about 50 kilograms, around 100 pounds, and it contains about 25 to 30 kilograms of uranium hexafluoride. That's enough to make a nuclear weapon once you convert the uranium hexafluoride into uranium metal. All right, so how do we do that? Well… just to show you how large these containers are—here's the equivalent of ten atomic bombs' worth of 60% enriched uranium hexafluoride.

It's about—not quite—400 kilograms. They have 408 kilograms, so really they have 11. If you do more careful arithmetic, they can make 11 atomic bombs with this material. Okay, this is for 90% enriched. These containers have 60% enriched, so you want to convert the 60% enriched uranium hexafluoride to 90%. Now, the reason it's uranium hexafluoride—which is a chemical substance—is because it's a kind of crystal. If this glass container held a very small crystal, just a small amount of uranium hexafluoride, and its temperature was maybe a hundred degrees Fahrenheit—about 40 to 50 degrees Celsius—then that's what you'd be looking at.

#Glenn

You wouldn't see the crystal there.

#Theodore Postol

You'd only see a clear container because it would be a gas. Uranium hexafluoride would be a dilute gas—a very thin gas. And the reason you want it as a thin gas is that you're going to put it into what are called centrifuges. We're not going to worry about exactly...

#Theodore Postol

How do these centrifuges work?

#Theodore Postol

All we need to know is that the Iranians have these centrifuges, and they know how to use them. That’s all we need to know right now. And they have cascades of these. This is a particular cascade—174 centrifuges—where the enriched uranium comes out, which could be 90% enriched.

#Theodore Postol

Now, you’d need a few weeks.

#Theodore Postol

—with one of these cascades to enrich the 60% gaseous uranium hexafluoride to 90% enriched uranium. But it’s still uranium hexafluoride, so I need to convert that to metal. Let’s not worry about that right now. That’ll give me… we won’t worry about a critical mass. Let me just—alright, we’ll deal with that later. So what I would do is simply blow—well, I have a device, about the size of a large closet, that would be blowing very, very toxic, high-temperature gas—hydrogen fluoride—through particles, through a gas of uranium hexafluoride. This is a very high-temperature, very toxic material. But you can build something that’s, you know, a few feet in size to do this. You have a reaction chamber: high-temperature hydrogen fluoride, high-temperature uranium hexafluoride. What comes out are small particles of a green—

#Theodore Postol

Material called uranium tetrafluoride, and that green material can be easily separated out with what's called a cyclone separator, so all the particles precipitate out. I take those particles, put them into a container with lithium or calcium, and heat the container up. It's a high-pressure container.

#Glenn

The chemical reaction happens at some point.

#Theodore Postol

I get a very high temperature, so this is very high pressure, but, you know, I can have it sitting on my desk here. Obviously, you'd have some vacuum, but it's not something that needs a big facility. And then what happens is the metallic uranium precipitates out. It's heavier than the magnesium chloride or calcium chloride. And you have this—an ingot of uranium, 90% enriched uranium.

#Glenn

That's all doable in a tunnel.

#Theodore Postol

A few hundred square meters of floor space is all you need—just a few hundred square meters. This is not a big operation. You do, of course, need baffles, but this is the kind of equipment the Iranians already have. Then you machine it. Now, to build a nuclear weapon, all you need to do is assemble it. This is a cartoon design.

In this cartoon design, you have a sphere of uranium-235, and you have two plugs of uranium-235 with a little bit of conventional explosive. It's very easy to build. The conventional explosives drive these two sections together—it's not to scale, but that doesn't matter. The idea is that they come together into this sphere, creating a critical mass. I have some material like beryllium and plutonium that will generate neutrons, and this thing will go nuclear and give me about a 15-kiloton yield. I don' t need to test this. Let me repeat that: I do not need to test this weapon. This weapon never needs to be tested before I use it. So I can have ten or eleven weapons, untested, that I can deliver with total confidence they'll work. I can test the device with depleted uranium just to make sure the assembly process works.

#Glenn

You know, so I make a few.

#Theodore Postol

And then, once I have the device, I just assemble it with uranium—90% enriched uranium. No problem at all. The United States did this for Hiroshima. We never tested the Hiroshima bomb; we didn't bother. The bomb that was tested was the Nagasaki bomb, which was made of plutonium. The reasons you need plutonium, you'd have to test—that's another story. I don't need to go into that now. All right, so let's step back again and say, okay, I have ten or eleven of these weapons. I can build them. I can build them within weeks.

In fact, I could probably build them in less than a week, because I might have multiple centrifuge cascades. One of these cascades could take four or five weeks to enrich enough 60% uranium hexafluoride to reach 90%. But if I have two or three cascades, I can do it in just a few weeks. There's no reason to think they don't have several of these cascades. I mean, they've been building thousands of centrifuges. We don't know how many they have stashed away. Not everything was necessarily in Isfahan or Fordow.

#Glenn

You know, we didn't have any numbers yet.

#Theodore Postol

Toward the end, when we—the Americans—broke the treaty, or the agreement we had for Iran to limit its enrichment capability, we lost the ability to monitor their construction of centrifuges. They said, "Okay, if you're taking away the agreement, we're not going to let you look at it." They had let us, for a long time, watch the 60% enriched uranium, which they started to produce after Donald Trump broke the agreement. And incidentally, Joe Biden shouldn't get off on this either, because Trump broke the agreement, Biden became president, and he didn't immediately reinstate it.

And I can tell you why. That's important, because he's surrounded by these idiot Democrats. We talk about idiot Republicans—there's plenty of idiots and stupidity to go around in the U.S. national security community. And what these idiots were saying was, "Oh, we're now in a position to extract further concessions from the Iranians, so let's not give them back the treaty." Well, I don't need to tell you—you're a more studied person on these matters—you reach an agreement, you meet the terms of the agreement, you don't start re-bargaining again. And Biden deserves a large amount of the negative credit for this agreement.

#Glenn

A disaster had occurred.

#Theodore Postol

It's not simply Trump. And I think all these interviews where you see Jake Sullivan there and he says, "Oh, you know, Trump did this." Well, let me tell you, Jake Sullivan was part of that. And these guys should not be allowed to get away with what they did. The Biden people are just as responsible for this disaster we're now facing. Anyway, sorry about that—I'll get off my stool now. Okay, so let me show you what a targeteer might do. And now I'm speaking from some significant experience here. I was involved in monitoring U.S. nuclear planning. I studied the plans. I had oversight responsibilities while working for the Chief of Naval Operations as an advisor. So I knew how we were using our nuclear forces. It wasn't some briefing that Jake Sullivan gets, where he sees all these little pictures of how we do this and that.

This is, you know, response three. I know where the ground zeros go, unlike these idiots who claim to be experts. I know how you place the ground zeros—I saw the way we did it. Anyway, let me show you what an informed, well-studied Iranian targeteer could do. First of all, you'd want to do maximum damage. Since the Israelis would have certainly killed a very large number of Iranian civilians, you are now totally justified in attacking Israeli civilians as well. They started it. They set the standard. You are retaliating. So that's my assumption here. I don't see any other assumption you can have, because, you know… anyway. What I've done is shown the fireballs of these nuclear detonations. They're only hundreds of meters in diameter. This one is a couple of kilometers—one and a half or two kilometers—in radius. So these are a few hundred meters in diameter.

#Glenn

And inside this fireball, when the nuclear weapon detonates…

#Theodore Postol

These are low-yield weapons. They're not thermonuclear weapons. They're simple—you know, simple weapons, so to speak. Within a fraction of a second—within a hundred-millionth of a second—an enormous amount of energy is released in a very small interval of time.

#Glenn

And this little ball of uranium that's been assembled will just turn into a hot mass of material.

#Theodore Postol

And it'll be low confined—just a few meters in size for a few hundred millionths of a second. It'll reach tens of millions of degrees in temperature, not hundreds of millions. If it were a thermonuclear weapon, it would be hotter, but tens of millions of degrees is hot enough. What happens is it emits X-rays, which are absorbed by the surrounding air, and that air becomes superheated to maybe a million degrees. It cools rapidly from about ten million degrees to a million degrees, and the fireball might be 30, 40, 50, or even 100 feet in diameter, because it's propagating outward at the speed of light initially.

Now that you have this superheated mass of air, it violently starts to expand because its density is that of normal air, but its temperature is a million degrees. So this thing is going to expand outward, acting like a fast-moving piston on the surrounding air, which has no chance to move. The air gets piled up as a shockwave at the edge of the fireball. When the fireball reaches its maximum size at about one second, its average temperature has dropped to around 8,000 degrees Kelvin—about 2,000 degrees hotter than the surface of the sun. But this isn't 150 million kilometers away; it's just kilometers, even fractions of kilometers, away. The light and heat radiated by this ball of fire are tremendous.

And because of that, it sets fires. And what these little yellow lines show is roughly the range at which fires will be set. Notice there are areas in between that I've intentionally left where the fire zone isn't initiated, because I'm going to depend on the fires to do extreme damage and killing. My objective here is to maximize death and destruction with these three weapons. Remember, I have eight others I could be using elsewhere in Israel. So, here's what happens when the nuclear weapon detonates. This is the cloud from Nagasaki, and what you see is a rising cloud. It's white because it's condensing water vapor from the lower altitudes. You had a fireball created at a lower altitude, and it buoyantly rises.

As it rises, it expands and cools. When it expands and cools, droplets of water form, so it becomes like a cloud. Of course, it's very radioactive—tremendously radioactive. And look below here: you see the column of buoyantly rising hot air. This is just buoyancy, just Archimedes' principle. It sets up an airflow, and you can see that the violently burning area below, which is creating soot, is feeding up this stem. There are fiercely burning fires on the ground below. The same is true here—this is the Hiroshima bomb. Same thing, you see. This isn't unique. The idea that firestorms are unique to Nagasaki or Hiroshima is nonsense. That's for the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists to talk about with their non-expert people.

#Glenn

The reality is, these create firestorms.

#Theodore Postol

So what happens? Well, let's look at a distance of about a kilometer, maybe a little over a kilometer—say a kilometer and a quarter or something like that. Within a tenth of a second, if you have a structure—this is a wood-frame structure, and different structures respond differently—you'd see the bright light of the fireball growing. That's 0.1 second, because the fireball is very hot, but it hasn't yet grown to its maximum size when it's brightest. It's brightest about one second after detonation. It's, of course, generated, and the shockwave breaks away, but the shockwave hasn't yet reached out to around a kilometer or so.

And so what happens is the front of this building is burning off, and of course, through the windows, ignitions are occurring. The interior of the building is also being set on fire. About 10 or 11 seconds later, the shockwave reaches the building, and you can see the top being crushed. Most people focus on the shockwave—it envelops the building, crushes it, and causes tremendous damage. The shockwave, of course, does extraordinary levels of damage, but it's wrong to focus on it as the greatest danger in terms of the killing from this nuclear detonation.

It's wrong. It's the fire that kills people. And the fire is generated from combusting material. So here's a fire generated in Hamburg in 1943. This fire is burning—this picture was probably taken about 40 or 45 minutes into the attack. These fires were generated by incendiary weapons, not a nuclear weapon, but it doesn't matter. The fire I'll be talking about hereafter is initiated by the nuclear weapon, but the fire burns like any other vast area fire. A vast area fire, though, is different in character from the small fires you're used to seeing. The phenomenology is the same, just on a different scale.

#Glenn

So the way this place was set on fire was that they dropped munitions.

#Theodore Postol

Unlike what people often believe, this was intentional. It wasn't a mass fire.

#Theodore Postol

There were elaborate studies done on how many incendiaries to drop and at what density.

#Theodore Postol

Because you wanted the incendiaries to drop between natural firebreaks. Those would be the natural firebreaks that occurred in terms of initiating the fires. So the Allies did statistical studies—this was not an accident. And also, they weren't simply incendiary munitions being dropped; some of them were booby-trapped. The reason was that if an incendiary came through your roof—which they were designed to do, to penetrate the roofs and start fires in the interiors where they would burn and spread more rapidly—there were sometimes small bombs attached. So if someone in a room tried to pick up the incendiary and throw it out into the street, it would detonate and kill them.

So this was very deeply and carefully thought out—just like this nuclear attack I'm talking about is deeply and carefully thought out. Spread the detonations out wide enough so that not every part of the area is set on fire initially. This is death by careful analysis. So what happens then is the fires are most intense nearest where the fireball was; the fires are much less intense at the periphery, but they're initiated. They're, you know, um, fires—your curtains are on fire. Everything in your apartment is not on fire, but the curtains are on fire.

#Glenn

Maybe parts of the rug are on fire.

#Theodore Postol

If there are books, or especially if you have a desk with papers on it, the paper's on fire. You're not trying to put those fires out. A blast wave has just come through—that caused enough interior damage, shattering windows, knocking down interior walls. I mean, not the exterior walls, but you're badly shaken up. Family members are possibly injured—or probably injured. Some are burned because the fireball is bright enough to burn their skin. You're not worried about putting out those fires; you're worried about getting out into the street, away from this horrifying level of damage inside your home.

So this is a general area of concern—uncountably large, like someone went around lighting matches and throwing them all over the place, just dropping them. The fires aren't tremendously intense, but there are numerous locations, and nobody's dealing with them. So very quickly, the fires in the interior start causing air to rise buoyantly from the ground—because hot air rises. And this buoyant rising of air leaves a low-pressure area behind it. The air rises; it has a sucking action, so air comes in from below. And since you have symmetry in the rising air, you get competition for the air in the center.

So the net result is that the airflow tends to move inward. And what happens is you get a fire burning over the entire area, because the buoyantly rising air sets everything on fire. If you want to get a sense of the area that burns out—even though there were areas that weren't initially set on fire—they end up catching fire. Now, the benefit, you know, and I'm talking here in a ferocious, almost murderous sense, is that this kind of attack can set a significantly larger area on fire with three weapons properly placed than you could with individual ones.

So there's a great benefit to setting the weapons apart, and I have the precision to deliver them that way. Now, in the case of these lower-yield weapons, the nuclear radiation from the fireball is intense—significant enough that, within just a few hundred millionths of a second, this tremendous amount of energy is released and, within one second, creates a fireball. Then you have neutrons and gamma rays radiating out from that very small volume of air. With bigger weapons, the neutron and radiation doses increase.

If I have a much higher-yield weapon, the range at which lethal neutron and gamma radiation spreads increases, but only slowly compared to the blast and fire. So if it were a higher-yield weapon, you wouldn't even bother talking about the lethal radiation from what's called the prompt radiation, because you'd already be dead from the blast and the intense light and heat. But with lower-yield weapons, you're not necessarily killed immediately by the prompt radiation. So there would be large numbers of people exposed to that radiation—some receiving lethal doses at the ranges shown here, and others receiving sublethal doses at much longer ranges that would kill them within weeks if they didn't die in the fire.

The chances are very good they would die in the fire. They wouldn't escape. But if, for some reason, they happened to get out of the fire zone, they'd die weeks later from radiation exposure. And to make matters even worse—this shows you Hiroshima, and the scale here is in kilometers—there was an area of intense rainfall that was radioactive. What happens is, the smoke created by incomplete combustion of burning materials forms nucleation points for water to condense on. When the water condenses, other things condense with it—hydrogen sulfide, which is another byproduct of fire, and nitrous oxides. These are poisonous materials.

Cyanide, you know, carbon monoxide—all of these really nasty things. And this dust, or rather these carbonaceous particles, can get into your lungs. They can very efficiently deliver radioactive materials as well as toxic materials to your body. So if we look at where this radioactive rain fell—or could fall—here's a region, assuming a certain wind direction, where the radioactive rain from one detonation might land. This would depend on the weather. If the wind happened to be blowing toward the Mediterranean, the radioactive rain would go there. But if the wind were blowing inland, it could be worse.

#Glenn

You could—if you know the weather patterns well enough, you know, the land winds and…

#Theodore Postol

And sea winds are predictable. You could time your attack to make sure the sea winds carry the radioactive rain inland. I mean, if you're in the business of spreading death and destruction because your people have been killed, I wouldn't put it past you. Again, if I were in the mindset to be as murderous as I possibly could be, I would wait for a good sea wind attack. You know, it's just a matter of the time of day. And of course, I haven't had a chance yet—but the next time I give this lecture, I'll be able to show it—because it's so confusing. You can see that very large areas of Tel Aviv, in this case downwind, would be subjected to radioactive rain following the nuclear attack.

#Theodore Postol

Many, many injuries would result from exposure to that.

#Theodore Postol

Here is just a—

#Theodore Postol

The horrifying image of a man dying from radiation exposure.

#Theodore Postol

What you're seeing here is probably weeks after he was exposed. He received a lethal, though not immediately lethal, dose of radiation. What happens is that the cells in your blood responsible for coagulation disappear.

#Glenn

So your blood doesn't coagulate, so you basically become a hemophiliac.

#Theodore Postol

And what you also lose are the components of the blood responsible for fighting infection. So what happens is, you die of massive infection and internal bleeding. It's obviously not a pleasant way to go. The net result is that retaliation would be possible even if Iran does not currently have nuclear weapons, and it's perfectly reasonable to expect this. The message, I think, is important for people to understand. And I'm talking about the Israeli political leadership—and perhaps more importantly, not just the Israeli political leadership, but more importantly, the...

#Theodore Postol

The Israeli people, who are not as crazy as this leadership is, should understand that a nuclear attack on Iran would be answered with a nuclear response—that Iran is capable of responding immediately, even though they haven't necessarily built nuclear weapons yet. They have the means to do it. And getting destroyed two or three weeks later is no different, in the end, from an immediate response. So don't do it. Don't use nuclear weapons against Iran, because there will be death and destruction on the scale of millions of people on all sides. It would be horrendous. And just to give you a sense of the ferocity of these fires, let me go on for just a few more minutes to give you an idea.

This is not a fire like the kind of normal fires you're used to. If you think of a fire from your experience with a fireplace—you know, Norway's a cold place, it's nice to have fires—you sit around the fire, there's usually a cool draft coming into the fireplace, warm air going up the chimney, and everybody's nice and toasty. Well, if you have an area of ground on fire—and this area would be tens of square kilometers burning—the buildings are burning too. So this is a thin wafer, actually a thin wafer of combusting material. It's oversized in this diagram, but that thin wafer is very hot. In fact, the average air temperature in this thin wafer will reach above the boiling point of water.

So you'll have air above the boiling point of water reaching heights several times that of the tallest buildings, because that's where combustion is occurring—at building height. The air velocities will be hurricane force, because this rising area, this volume of air, is incredibly large. For example, if I double the size of this area—if I double the radius—the area being heated goes up by a factor of four. Three times the radius goes up by a factor of nine or ten. So, since the circumference only increases linearly, the air has to move faster and faster to keep feeding the oxygen. It's limited by buoyancy, by the rate at which air can rise, and by the scale of the area that's on fire.

So this is like being inside it. Imagine you have a big area that you've set on fire—not just little fireplace fires, but it extends 400 meters around you, and you're in the middle of it. The air is coming in and rising buoyantly, and the flames are all around you. That's the environment you're in. So you get these incredible drafts—macroscopic winds over kilometers, enormously high speeds, you know, hundreds of kilometers per hour—driving the fire. This is a fire over, I think, several tens of centimeters. Here's an example: over fractions of a kilometer, a real fire, you can see the same behavior. We know how this happens. Here's an example of an experiment done with candles on a board—you can see how the fire was initially set as a ring.

#Glenn

The ring was set.

#Theodore Postol

No fire in the beginning, but there was no place for the air to go inside, so the air started moving inward, and the whole set of candles caught fire. This shows the kind of violent wind you get—tornadoes generated from ground winds. The tornadoes aren't formed from turbulence in the sky; they come from differential heating on the ground. You have one area burning more intensely than another, so it rises and expands more violently. You get a rotating motion—like what's called a dust devil—but with unbelievably high winds, again, 100 to 200 kilometers per hour. Temperatures, of course, are above the boiling point of water. And what happens is, when people try to run away and they're in the streets...

#Theodore Postol

You get a phenomenon like this.

#Theodore Postol

They just get burned alive by the high-temperature winds. And if they're in shelters, what happens is the shelters get extremely hot. So you're in a shelter, you're in Tel Aviv, you've gone down into it. For a significant fraction of the people, if the shelters are strong enough, they're not killed by the blast—but there's a raging fire above them. This fire is going to go on for five, six, seven, eight hours. Everything combustible is going to burn, burning intensely. Because just like when you use a bellows to heat coal and it burns more violently, that's what's happening from these incoming winds.

#Theodore Postol

And everything—all the concrete...

#Theodore Postol

All the bricks get heated to very high temperatures, and what happens is the shelters get converted into ovens. This is what you saw in places like Hamburg and Dresden in World War II. So this would be like nothing you could ever imagine. If you want to get a sense of what the streets would look like—well, you might still have many standing buildings in Tel Aviv. A lot of them are high-rises, and many won’t be knocked down by the blast wave. These are low-yield nuclear weapons; they’ll blow out all the interiors of the buildings and set fires to everything inside, but they may not knock down structures that are a little farther out from the actual detonation point.

So you'll have scenes like this—and this is a scene from Hamburg. These were fire trucks that were abandoned. The streets were so hot the asphalt melted—melted. These firefighters escaped because they were at the edge of the fire zone. They got out by lying down next to the curbs and pulling themselves away, because the winds were so strong. When the winds began, they realized they had to escape, and the hot air hadn’t yet developed since the fires weren’t burning everywhere. Otherwise, they would have been killed—incinerated in the fire. This is an example of what the streets looked like; you can see they were covered with debris because the buildings were collapsing.

So the fact that they weren’t knocked down still led to tremendous damage. Here’s Nagasaki before the atomic bombing. The distances here are small—about one kilometer from here to here, maybe less. What’s good about this photo is that it gives you enough detail; a distant photo wouldn’t show that. And here’s what it looks like after. You’re seeing maybe two or three square kilometers out of twenty-five or thirty, all of which would look the same. This is the level of damage you’d see in a modern city. So anyone who thinks—any Israeli political leader or member of the military—I want the military leaders to see this too and be aware of it.

Because I want the guy who’s told by Netanyahu to launch nuclear weapons against Iran to say, “No, sir. I’m not going to do something that leads to the destruction of Israel.” That’s what I want Mossad members, the Israeli Air Force, and the Israeli ground troops to know. I want them to understand this. I want everyone in Israel to realize that this is what would happen if you attack Iran—because they’ll be able to put together nuclear weapons and respond. You will not get away with it, and the result will be the death of millions more people than are already dead from your attack. That’s the message I want to send in this discussion.

#Glenn

Yeah, it's quite a grim possibility, but it's also scary that we're actually heading in that direction. I think people need to know this.

#Theodore Postol

Glenn, people need to know this. It can't be abstract. I put this together because I didn’t want it to be abstract. “Oh, a few million people died.” That’s an abstraction. I want them to see what a body on the street looks like—someone who tried to escape. What the desiccated corpse of a person inside a shelter looks like. I want them to see this, because that’s the only way it becomes real. And I think the only way you’re going to decrease the chances of something catastrophic like this happening is if people have an intestinal understanding—a real understanding—of what would happen. That's why I put together this talk. And anybody else who wants to hear it, let me know. I'll be giving it anywhere.

#Glenn

Well, thank you very much for putting together the material. I couldn't agree more with you. The casualness of the whole thing—how we're sleepwalking into such a disaster—is quite shocking. After all these years of carefully avoiding nuclear war, this is where we're heading. Do you have any final thoughts before we wrap up?

#Theodore Postol

Well, I think the situation is serious. I think the war, from the point of view of the Israelis and the Americans, has already been lost. That doesn't mean Israel has to cease as a state—Israel can survive as a state—but it has to adopt a different attitude toward Iran. Israelis have to say, "We have to live and let live." We don't have to agree with the Iranian system of government. We don't have to like them. We don't have to love them. But we need to respect their right to exist as a great nation. And unless we reach that understanding, and help them understand that we mean it, we're not going to try another sneak attack.

We're not going to pretend we're negotiating and then attack them like we did with Hezbollah in Qatar, or like we did on February 28th. We cannot continue this way. We need to establish credibility as a negotiating state that acts according to the diplomatic rules that have been in place since Ivan the Terrible was eventually overtaken by civilization and diplomacy. You cannot keep operating like this. You are not the chosen people you think you are. You are a people with a great culture and great accomplishments.

You have every reason to be proud of those accomplishments, but you have no right to be murderous in this way, and you have no right to disrespect the rights of other countries that also want to survive on their own. You need to accept that, and you need to communicate it to the world—especially to the Iranians—because right now, if I were Iranian, I wouldn't believe a word you're saying diplomatically. And if I don't believe it, I'm going to stay at the wheel, I'm going to continue these attacks, and it will eventually result in terrible damage to Israel, beyond the terrible damage that has already occurred. Anyone who thinks that terrible damage hasn't already happened to Israel has been smoking banana peels. It's just not—

#Theodore Postol

Understanding what this reality is.

#Theodore Postol

The economy of Israel is a shambles. And incidentally, I should say, as an American—let me be clear—I don’t think of myself as an American Jew, though I come from a Jewish background. I think of myself simply as an American. But I can tell you, as an American, that Americans are fed up with Israel. Israel no longer has the relationship with the American public that it used to have. I talk to Americans all the time who say, “I’m not going to war to defend those Israelis, and I’m not going to be sucked into a war to defend those Israelis.” So Israelis who think they’re going to be on the gravy train after this better think twice, because the American population is rethinking.

And I mean the population. And I'm not only talking about Americans who aren’t Jewish; I’m talking about Americans who are Jewish. Like I say, I don’t think of myself as an American Jew. I think of my wife as a Catholic. I don’t think of myself in those terms. But I can tell you, I know a lot of American Jews, and I’m not alone in the view that the people in Israel have taken advantage of the United States. I’m finished with them—and a lot of other Americans are too. They’d better think about that, because they have an economy they need to rebuild, and the amount of help they may be expecting to get is very unlikely to be what they’ve been getting in the past. That’s my expectation.