

# Anthony Aguilar: Iran Still Has 70% of Missiles: The Truth About the Conflict

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## #Nima

Last time we were talking about Gaza and the situation in Gaza, because you were in Gaza, you saw what has happened there. And today, everything is different in the Middle East. We have a new war in the Middle East between the United States, unfortunately, and Iran happening. And on the other hand, Israel finally gets its final objective, its main objective, which was the war against Iran, as they call it, the head of the octopus. They wanted to destroy Iran as the head of the octopus. Octopus means the axis of resistance. And how do you see the situation with the war and the way the Trump administration is dealing with the case of the war against Iran?

## #Guest

Well, as we approach the dawn of the 62nd day since February 28th, the administration has handled this conflict disastrously. I made a comment as early as the first day of the opening shots of Tomahawks fired into Tehran and Manab, that from the onset, the United States had already lost this conflict at a strategic level. And that should always be the driving objective in a conflict. You can have every win at the tactical level, but without operational lines of effort to achieve a strategic end state that should be tied to national policy, you've lost. It's the experience of Iraq. It's the experience of Afghanistan. It's the experience of Syria. It was the experience of Vietnam. And this administration has handled this conflict catastrophically and disastrously.

## #Nima

You mean a strategy, and you see some sort of a strategic defeat for the United States. What was the main objective, looking at what has happened so far? We know that, from what we've heard from the Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, he said on camera that Israel was to attack Iran. They wanted to attack Iran, so we attacked Iran in order to avoid an Iranian attack on American bases in the case of an Israeli attack on Iran. You know, it's somehow amazing that the United States got involved in this war at the request of Benjamin Netanyahu and the Israelis. But what were the objectives, if you were to mention the objectives of the United States, and comparing to what Benjamin Netanyahu and the Israelis had in their mind, what was that—the objectives?

## **#Guest**

Well, I am not surprised nor shocked by the hubris of this administration and the stumbling into this conflict. I am deeply disappointed and embarrassed as a nation, as a former Army officer. But I can honestly say that I'm not shocked. When I look at how this conflict came to be, this is what will be written in the annals of history: that the United States initiated a large-scale operation, a large-scale kinetic operation, against Iran, where diplomacy did have inroads. We still had diplomatic, economic, informational options. The military—the use of force, a war—should always be the last resort, and we were far from that. The United States embarked on a disastrous, catastrophic war that will forever reshape Western Asia, will forever reshape the United States' position in the world. And we did so at the behest of a preemptive strike—to a notional preemptive strike—of what may have happened, from what an ally perhaps may have responded to, this potential but unconfirmed notional strike to an existential threat of which Iran did not possess the weapons from which this existential threat emanated.

That's what will be written in the history books. Is that confusing? It sure is. And when you look at how you tie a strategy to that, this administration, day by day, hour by hour, is simply flying by the seat of their pants—out-of-the-pocket ideas and strategies. Currently, we are now embroiled in a distant blockade, which the president has now said will be extended. Blockades are incredibly expensive to conduct, and this blockade is not achieving any effect or any objective end state that is beneficial to the security of the United States or to the security or balance of the world. Quite frankly, we, the United States, are acting as the terrorists.

## **#Nima**

When you look at the war, we had 39 days of war in which it seems that the United States had, or somehow the Israeli government convinced the United States that they were going to have some sort of coup in Iran, some sort of regime change in Iran. As you know, as the United States was attacking, you see the difficulties—the sanctions, the riots in Iran—all together coming, and the attack on the part of the United States and Israel would bring down the government and the so-called regime change. How did you find it? Because Iranians say that, the Iranian government says that since the war started on February 28th, and on March 10th the government of the United States started talking, sending messages to the Iranian government: "Let's talk, let's find some sort of solution." What happened during those days? What is your understanding of the way the United States started, and the war somehow continued for 39 days?

## **#Guest**

Well, I'll tell you, it is no mystery as to why, because Donald Trump told us explicitly that he had a feeling. And Jared Kushner told him that he had a feeling. So we were led into a war by the feelings of a commander in chief who has never served in the military, nor has ever handled or had to

struggle with any geopolitical crisis of this nature, advised by his son-in-law, who also has no experience, who is not a diplomat, who is not a foreign service officer, who is not a negotiator. He's a real estate mogul. Did Iran possess an existential threat to the United States? No. Did Iran possess a weaponized nuclear capability to where they were two weeks away from having the nuclear bomb?

No. Were the seeds of revolution or a coup ripe in Iran, and was it the perfect time to launch a military operation for Iranians to rise up and decapitate their government and have a revolution? No. No. Every aspect of the justification or the thoughts of success in going into this conflict were either tacitly untrue or blatant lies. And when you look at how this war has then proceeded, especially in the first 39 days, we declared victory. We declared the obliteration of their military. We declared success. The United States declared that we don't need the Strait of Hormuz and it's not important to us. Europe, if you want it, you go do something about it.

And yet here we are, still there. And considering that this war will come to an end like all wars. There is not a war in history that has not ended. And yes, I understand the Korean War, which has never ended, which came to a stalemate and an armistice, never a treaty. Every war ends with a political end state, a treaty. World War I, World War II, the U.S. Civil War, etc., etc. This war will come to a conclusion with some sort of diplomatic end state. And in that end state, we will find that the United States has lost hundreds of lives, thousands—no, excuse me, trillions—in resources. We have exposed our vulnerabilities to actual peer threats such as Russia and China and North Korea.

And in doing so, at best, this administration can only hope that they can bring Iran to the negotiating table to perhaps bring us back to what we once had with the JCPOA before this administration shredded it up and said it was a disaster and would only lead to Iran having a nuclear weapon, which is not true. And to be honest, I don't think Donald Trump, nor Pete Hegseth, nor the current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Dan Cain, who I worked with personally, have ever read the JCPOA or understand the aspects of it. Because if they had, they'd realize that much of what they're saying, of what they want from Iran, we already had.

## **#Nima**

Actually, today they were asked—I'm not talking about Pete Hegseth—but he was asked if he studied, you know, the outcome, the consequences that they're going to face or confront in the Strait of Hormuz. Because the Strait of Hormuz right now is one of the most challenging problems in the area. Since the war started, Iran has captured the strait. Right now, it's under the total control of the Iranian government. They're controlling everything. Do you think they were so hesitant? General Cain was hesitant to answer the question.

He was asked if he told the administration, Donald Trump himself or the administration, that that would be a consequence if you attack Iran — that the Strait of Hormuz would be under Iranian control. And what is your understanding? Do you think they're still starting these things, or they're just feeling these wars are starting, or they go to these wars by the feeling of the president or

someone in the administration, or the pressure they're receiving from the Israelis, or some sort of combination between Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu? That's the only thing that matters. What is your understanding of that?

## **#Guest**

Well, in 2002 and then later in 2014, the United States Department of Defense conducted a \$250 million war game called Project Millennium Challenge. That was led by a United States Marine combat veteran, a three-star general. In doing so, he was tasked with being Iran, fighting the United States in a war. And what was found from that is that the United States would militarily lose, that the pursuit of a conflict with Iran would be futile and would lead to defeat, and that we should pursue, at every avenue, diplomacy and negotiation.

What we also found in that study, which I was personally involved in in 2014, when I was a student at the Command and General Staff College, is that three factors would lead to the American defeat: an overestimation of our capability, an underestimation of Iran's resolve, and an underestimation of the asymmetric warfare capability that Iran can bear. Not its conventional navy, not its conventional air force, but its asymmetric capability under a mosaic command structure, which essentially is an unconventional warfare structure that the United States does not bode well against. And in looking at that, those are the exact fallacies that the United States stumbled into at the start of this war.

I firmly believe that Donald Trump, Pete Hegseth, Marco Rubio, Steve Witkoff, Jared Kushner all believed that the United States would leverage overwhelming military firepower, decapitate the regime, and deliver a significant moral blow. I do believe that the targeting of the Manab school was intentional. I do believe that the United States was well aware of the target, what it was, what the impact would be, and in doing so intended to strike that target, knowing that it was a school — not an auxiliary military base, not an IRGC secret base school. And we did it knowingly. Whether that was at the behest of Israel or of our own accord, we still did it.

And I believe that the administration thought that that would bring Iran to its knees, bring Iran to the negotiating table begging for some type of settlement, and that this war would be over in less than a week's time. I sincerely think that this administration genuinely thought that. However, I also believe that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Dan Kane, did not provide significant input or advice to the military problem set, but simply went along with the political end state, the political rhetoric. And I believe that his red line is he'll go along with anything this administration wants to do up to the certain point of the use of a tactical nuke. That's his red line. But everything else below that he feels is moral, ethical, and justified — which it is not. And Dan Kane is not a warfighter.

Pete Hegseth is not a warfighter. Any warfighter worth their salt would have advised this president not to pursue this course of action. Where we are now, the United States is in a dilemma. We have the choice of a worse choice or the choice of a worst, worst choice. There is no solution, and there is no success. And the United States better figure out a way to bring negotiation into settlement, or we

will continue to lose drastically. We've already lost trillions. We've already lost service members' lives, over 400 service members wounded, and we haven't even put a boot on the ground in Iran. So if this war continues with this blockade and this limited excursion, as Donald Trump calls it, we will find ourselves embroiled in a larger war that will find us there for decades.

And anybody that says that that's outlandish, I would say, look at Iraq, look at Afghanistan, look at Syria. People don't understand now that Syria — we've been in Syria now for 11 years. Eleven years we've now been in Syria. Over 20 years, we've still been in Iraq. We're still operating under the same Authorization for the Use of Military Force that George Bush signed in 2002 to take us into the invasion of Iraq. We are still there operating under that authority. Afghanistan, over two decades. The Philippines, going on 50 years of presence, trying to disassemble the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. This is a fool's errand in this conflict. And I believe that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense, the Director of Intelligence, the DIA, Tulsi Gabbard — they should all be held accountable.

## **#Nima**

Tony, you mentioned the attack on the first day of the war, which was the attack on a primary school in Minab where 168 schoolgirls were killed. The way you describe it, did they really want Iran to attack other civilians — for example, some schools in GCC countries or even in Israel — to be attacked the same way, just to escalate the war beyond what it was? Because how can you interpret these sorts of attacks on the very first day of the war? Each and every target should be studied thoroughly, and they should know everything about the targets. If they attack a school, does it mean they want the same thing to happen in some other countries?

## **#Guest**

The only area on earth more surveilled than the Strait of Hormuz and the western coast of Iran, probably equal to or maybe more, would be the South China Sea. We cannot say that we didn't have updated intelligence, that we did not have updated signals intelligence, imagery intelligence, human intelligence, digital intelligence, satellite intelligence. We monitor this ubiquitously. It was clearly known that the Minab objective, the Minab location, was not an IRGC base, was not an auxiliary base. There was no base underneath it or a hidden headquarters. This was a school, a school where the walls were painted with flowers and butterflies and rainbows, where children played on the playground. We observed this.

The other aspect to this is that we used the TLAM, or the Tomahawk Land Attack Missile, the Tomahawk Cruise Missile, in this strike. Not one, but two. Everyone should understand that the Tomahawk Cruise Missile is essentially a small flying airplane. It can travel hundreds of kilometers. It can loiter for up to 24 hours. It is fully armed and it has full vision capability, meaning it's equipped with a full-motion color camera that watches the objective. We knew exactly what we were hitting, not once but twice. We knew what the intelligence said. We knew what we saw. And at any

moment, any moment, if there was a doubt or a change to the intelligence saying that we had outdated maps or outdated intelligence, you can see it.

As a Tomahawk cruise missile speeds toward the objective, you see it in full-motion video before it explodes. That missile could have been called off at any time, and we didn't. It was intentional. And I believe the intention behind that was to either deliver a crippling blow to the senior leaders of the IRGC, because many of their children did attend school there. It was meant as a moral blow to bring Iranians to their knees, begging for it to stop. But also, to your point, as an opportunity that perhaps it would provoke Iran into some type of visceral reaction corresponding to what we did—bombing a school or a neighborhood or something of the like in response.

And Iran did not retaliate as such. The Trump administration and Israel greatly overestimated their assessment of Iran and greatly underestimated Iran's resolve and Iran's willingness to fight a moral war while also protecting their interests. And anybody that says that Iran attacking the U.S. bases in the GCC countries was a war crime or immoral, that is factually not true. Military bases in the region, within the area of operations that have the ability to affect the war—to fire missiles, defend against missiles, deploy resources—are legitimate military targets. And that is a fact.

## **#Nima**

I think since the war started, we've seen the Iranian... How did you find the Iranian strategy? As you mentioned, there was an attack on these schools, some facilities in Iran, decapitation of the leadership in Iran, commanders... These are huge psychological pressures on Iranian society, on the Iranian military, army, IRGC. But the way they responded, they started attacking American bases in GCC countries. They literally destroyed all these radars in those bases. Then they started attacking radars in Israel. And looking at the current and new reports about how the United States has used offensive capabilities in terms of cruise missiles and defensive capability in terms of interceptors, and how the connection between the air defense system and radars is not there anymore because most of these radars were destroyed—how, looking at the battleground, do you find it if the United States decides to attack Iran again?

## **#Guest**

So I do believe that the United States is planning another round of kinetic strikes, or maybe even some type of amphibious assault on Qeshm Island to seize control of the strait. And I believe that's inevitable. That's coming when you look at what we've deployed to the theater. What I will say is that in the opening days of the war, in Iran's strategy, the United States and the Western world prefer to characterize Iran's military strategy as some nefarious, terrorist-like strategy by giving it cryptic names like their Mosaic command structure. The Mosaic command structure is simply a fluid and level command structure, of which the United States employs the exact same tactic. The Mosaic command structure is simply: if a leader or a commander is killed, the next leader or commander steps in to take his place and continues the mission.

If you look at how the United States military is organized with carrier battle groups, carrier strike groups, various commanders in various positions, the Army with corps, divisions, brigades, companies, battalions, and platoons, we have the same type of structure of leadership and organization. It is not a terrorist cell network. It is the smart way to command forces in the field. Iran simply did that in an asymmetric way. In the opening days of the conflict, Iran looked at centers of gravity. Centers of gravity and center of gravity analysis provide a clear picture of what you should strike, what you should strike first, and what you should strike when you have limited resources. The United States went in on it with just an all-out, shoot-everything approach, and it's costing us the trillions of dollars we have spent. We are nearly out of JASSM extended-range missiles. We are nearly out of Tomahawk missiles.

We are out of THAAD batteries and nearly out of Patriot missile systems. We are nearly out of SM-3s and SM-6s. We don't have much left in the inventory other than ground war or tactical nukes. We don't have much left that can cause much damage. So when you look at Iran's approach, they decided, OK, we have limited capability. We're not going to use our most exquisite ballistic missiles first, because we do know that Israel possesses a very robust Iron Dome system and that the United States has deployed vast resources to also defend the air. That's what a THAAD is — a Theater High Altitude Air Defense system, usually linked in with Patriots to shoot missiles out of the sky.

So Iran took the approach of, we're going to overwhelm with our Shahed one-way drones, cheap off-the-shelf to manufacture, to devastate the stock of U.S. and Israeli missile systems, which they did successfully, and strike at the things that make all the other things work — like the radar systems in Kuwait, the radar systems in Bahrain, the radar array in Israel that the United States has present for its THAADs and its Patriots and also in operation. Israel does not operate its Iron Dome or its David's Sling alone. They do it with us. So Iran chose to focus on the things that would take out the things that communicate to the other things.

And I would say they did so quite successfully. And if the United States were to mount another attack, we would be facing an advantageous Iran, because we do know that they maintain 70 percent of their ballistic and hypersonic ballistic missile capability. One hypersonic ballistic missile, which cannot be stopped — once it's fired, once it's going where it's going — you cannot defeat it. And that will sink an aircraft carrier. So when you look at what Iran has, what Iran controls, the United States is in a very precarious position in naval tactics and certainly in ground tactics. It is not a good situation.