

# Seyed M. Marandi: Iran's Underground Shield: Can The US Break It?

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## #Nima

What Donald Trump said just moments ago, he posted through social media. It says that Iran has just informed us that they are in a state of collapse. They want us to open up the Strait of Hormuz as soon as possible, and they're trying to figure out their leadership situation, which I believe they will be able to do. Who's communicating to Donald Trump in the United States that he feels this way and that Iran is collapsing? What is your understanding of what is happening? Basically, it's not just about what Donald Trump just tweeted. There is some sort of understanding in the mainstream media and by the Trump administration that there is some sort of fracture, division, and they're collapsing. What is happening?

## #Guest

Well, maybe Kushner changes his voice in the next room and speaks on as if he's calling from Iran, telling him that we're collapsing and please open the Strait of Hormuz and all that. Obviously, no one is communicating with Trump, and no one is speaking about Iran's imminent collapse or whatever it is that Trump says the Iranians are saying. I mean, it doesn't even make sense. Why would the Iranians communicate with him in the first place, and why did they just reject his attempt to impose talks in Islamabad? So that doesn't make sense. And obviously, Trump is not saying much about what the siege on the Strait of Hormuz that he's imposed is causing for the entire world. The global economy is reaching a very dangerous point, that tipping point that some people were talking about in some areas has begun, and I think over the next 10 days or so we're going to see the problems increase—very clearly visible problems across the world as a result of these policies.

For Trump, I assume that he may be hoping that he will outlast the Iranians. But again, it's like the 39-day war, it's like the Ramadan war, obviously. The Iranians are fighting for their survival. Trump is fighting a war of choice. Now, whether that war is a violent war or whether it's siege warfare, in either case, the Iranians are going to be very resilient. They are a very resilient people. I think across the world, people have already seen how the Iranians have managed the war beyond anyone's expectations, from what we're seeing, from the reactions that we're seeing across the globe. And I think that when it comes to siege warfare, it'll be the same. Of course, it's going to be

difficult, and of course, the Iranians are going to have shortages. But what Trump is doing to the entire world is going to be more difficult.

It's going to be worse because Iran is a country that has lived with sanctions. And as you know, there were years where we exported almost no oil under Trump's own maximum pressure sanctions for, I think, like three years or so. I don't know exactly how long, but for maybe up to three years, we exported almost no oil. As far as I recall, most of the oil that we exported was like a hundred or so thousand barrels of oil a day to China. And we weren't receiving money for that. That was for something that they'd already done.

They completed a project, they carried out a project, and this was Iran's commitment in return. So for a period of time, more or less the only oil that Iran was exporting was oil that Iran was not making any money from as a result. Very little money was made for a period of time. So that doesn't make things easy. Things will be difficult, regardless of how effective the siege is or is not. That's another point — how many ships actually go through, how successful the Americans are in blocking the siege. That's something that I've seen you discuss with your other guests, so I won't go down that road.

But the fact is that the Iranians, they know that in this waiting game, the American people, American allies, American politicians will be putting pressure on Trump to end this because he is making everyone suffer, and no one sees any reason for this suffering except for the fact that Zionists and Netanyahu and Trump have imposed it upon them. Whereas in the case of the Iranian people, they know that this suffering and this difficulty and the shortages will be imposed upon them by an external enemy that has no moral or legitimate reason to carry out this hostility, except for the fact that he is doing it on behalf of an ethno-supremacist regime that considers itself to be the master race, the chosen people, and therefore it can impose anything it wants on the rest of the world.

## **#Nima**

There are some rumors, Professor Marandi, that the United States wants to announce a no-fly zone over Iran in addition to the blockade happening. Is that going to somehow escalate the situation, or are we going to see some sort of military confrontation between Iran and the United States?

## **#Guest**

I don't think it's going to have any impact if such a thing happens, because the Iranian flights are going to continue. And if the United States attempts to target Iranian flights, then that would be war. And then the airspace over the Persian Gulf region, over the countries that are assisting the United States in its war against Iran, such as Qatar, Bahrain, the Emirates, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, they would face a very painful situation. So we'd be going back to war, basically. So if the Americans

attempt to do anything over Iranian airspace, it will be difficult. It will be very difficult for them. And Iran's key flights, I would assume, are basically to countries to the east of Iran and to the north of Iran.

And so the Americans would have to fly over Iranian airspace to airports in the north and the east of Iran, and that would be war. So there would be no more ceasefire. The ceasefire would be over. And remember, Nima, as I said before, and I don't really want to tire you with repetitive points, which I'm sure I do a lot, but we are entering the hot season. And the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Peninsula, becomes very hot and very humid. And it is going to become increasingly difficult for the United States to wage war under these circumstances. The Americans have always been careful to launch their wars in our part of the world.

There are many wars during times when the weather is good, like when they captured Kuwait or when they carried out their illegal invasion of Iraq. It was during the cool season. So in the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf, there are like six months of good weather, five months of very, very hot and humid weather, and let's say a month or two between hot and cold where the weather is transitioning. Right now we're at that transition stage. It'll take gradually, like I say, over a couple of weeks in the coming days, near the end of, by mid-May, I think the weather is going to rapidly increase and become very warm and very humid.

And so warfare will become much more difficult. So I am not quite sure the Americans are in a position to—not in a position, but I don't think it would be a smart move for them to engage in warfare. Of course, as we speak, if the Americans carry out an assault or flights over Iranian airspace, that would be the end of the ceasefire. And the Iranians would retaliate. And if they retaliate, that means they will get the opening opportunity attacks. They will strike at targets across the region. And that would be, I think, very beneficial to Iran. So a provocation by the Americans could allow the Iranians to carry out strikes anywhere they like across the region.

And at this moment, when the Americans are preparing their troops and their forces, I think that would be very beneficial to Iran. But in any case, this is increasingly going to become a difficult time for the Americans to wage war because of the weather. Yet the belief in Tehran is that we are close to war and that the Americans want to launch another major assault, a second chapter to this war. They've brought in lots of equipment, a lot of it, if not almost all of it, linked to ground warfare. And there are different scenarios that the Iranians are discussing for a land invasion. And the Iranians are preparing themselves for that. My discussions with people in Iran are that the Iranians are fully prepared.

They'll allow the Americans to come in. In some areas, the Americans will face very major problems because the Iranians are very deeply dug in. And in other areas, the Iranians will allow them to come in and make advances. And then they will start targeting them with missiles and drones and other weapons that the Iranians have prepared—weapon systems that the Iranians have prepared for two to three decades now. Remember, the Americans completely underestimated the Iranian

missile and drone capabilities. Their numbers—they have no idea how many missiles and drones Iran has. Iran is producing both missiles and drones as we speak.

And so when it's clear that they miscalculated those, and Iran's air defenses and the Iranian Air Force—when the Pakistani delegation came to Iran, Iranian jets flew with them, and they flew back. When they went back, they flew with them as well. And of course, we saw what Iranian air defenses did when the Americans were attempting to carry out an operation in Isfahan during those days. So when the Americans have completely miscalculated Iran's resilience and Iran's military capabilities, then I think we're probably going to see the Americans regret any land invasions. But I think it's quite possible that Trump will carry out an attack because I think he's gambling. I think he feels that he has to escalate.

He hasn't used the opportunity to take an off-ramp. He could have done that when Netanyahu initially accepted the ceasefire after 10 days of delay. And Iran said, okay, we will allow ships to leave the Strait of Hormuz in accordance—extra ships—in accordance with our agreement. Back then, at that point, he could have lifted the siege on ports and said, you know, declared some sort of success and said, okay, let's move on to the next phase of our negotiations. But he didn't do that. He escalated. And so now, since he did not use that opportunity, I think the chances that he will further escalate are high. And therefore, the prediction, the belief in Tehran, is that a major conflict is near at hand, is close by.

## **#Nima**

In recent days, we've seen air defense activities in Tehran and other cities in Iran. What is that? Because some people were talking about maybe some sort of attacks by drones or something of that sort. Then they said it was just a test—they were testing the air defense system. What is that, and how capable is the air defense system in Iran today compared to what it was before the ceasefire started?

## **#Guest**

I don't think anything serious happened. And I really don't know the state of Iran's air defenses and what capabilities they have. But remember, after the 12-day war, Iran went and improved its capabilities very rapidly over, what, like eight or so months, eight, nine months. And after eight, nine months, when the United States launched a second war against Iran, even though U.S. forces and U.S. capabilities are far greater than the regime, the combined force of the United States, the Israeli regime, and with the logistical support of the countries in the Persian Gulf, except for Iraq and Oman, the U.S. firepower and the firepower against Iran was much greater.

That's why during the 12-day war, even though it was an unprovoked attack, the Iranians defeated the Israelis. But this war, which was much bigger, Iran did, and they performed significantly better, if not much better, than in the 12-day war. And so the Iranians, during the past two or three weeks,

have been working day and night to prepare themselves for the next phase, and whatever shortcomings they have, find solutions for them to better protect their assets. Also, they've been working day and night as we speak. So I think that probably Iranian air defenses, which have different layers, are better now than they were back then.

They're better capable. They've done a pretty good job dealing with drones. I would imagine that they're even more prepared now to deal with drones and low-flying aircraft and helicopters than they were a few weeks ago. So, you know, the Americans, they've been preparing themselves for the last few weeks, but so have the Iranians. It's not as if the Iranians have been doing anything different. And this is Iran's home turf. Iran now knows what the enemy can do, and it's now preparing itself in order to better deal with its enemy. And I think now any threat that Iran makes is taken much more seriously.

The Saudis and the Emiratis and others know that if war is launched against Iran, they are part of this war, because without their consent—without these five countries giving consent, and Jordan, but these five countries in particular who are neighbors—without them giving consent to the Americans to use their airspace, their land, and the sea, the Persian Gulf in particular, or the Gulf of Oman, without that, the way you would respond would be impossible. The Americans just simply could not have done it before, and they cannot do it in the days and weeks ahead. So they've seen what Iran's capabilities are. They know what the Iranian response will be to strikes on Iran's critical infrastructure.

And Iran will definitely outlast them. Their critical infrastructure is very close to Iranian territory. They have very large projects. In Iran, their critical infrastructure is spread out across the country. It's very easy for Iran to retaliate, to respond, and to destroy those assets. And if it does, that means there won't be any—I mean, the Iranian commander for the missile force said that if we go there, there will be no oil coming from this region anymore for years to come. And that means a depression will be something that the world will be experiencing for years. Yeah.

## **#Nima**

We had a report on Israeli Channel 14. It says that IDF officers have been told in a confidential security briefing that Iran is succeeding in restoring parts of its ballistic missile program. They were talking about these two weeks of the ceasefire. And do you think, Professor Marandi, we had a meeting after the military commanders of Iran, Russia, and even Pakistan were part of that, but in a bilateral meeting between Iran and, you know, the deputy in Kyrgyzstan, that meeting happened. He said two points. One of them is that Iran is ready. America is no longer in a position to dictate its policies to independent nations. Basically, he's talking about Iran.

And the second point that he brought up, which is important, is that today the Islamic Republic of Iran, while preparing for a powerful defense and meeting the needs of its armed forces, is ready to share its defense and military capabilities with independent countries, especially the member states

of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. What are the capabilities? We remember—I remember what happened to Russia during the war in Ukraine. You know, the United States forced Russia into producing more ammunition, more arms, and literally improving the military-industrial complex of Russia. Is that happening to Iran? Well, no doubt.

## **#Guest**

The Iranian military industry is very different from the U.S. military industry. It's controlled by the state, and therefore it does as the state demands. It's not designed to make profits for billionaires and the oligarchy. So Iran, just like Russia, can produce missiles much faster, much more efficiently, and much cheaper than the United States. But it's not just that. I think that what we've seen is not only the unique resilience and resistance of the Iranian people and the Lebanese supporters of the resistance. And Hezbollah has been doing an extraordinary job, and I know you've been covering that. But this is something that the world is witnessing. A colleague of mine, a friend of mine, a Brazilian communist, was telling me just a couple of days ago that he's at a conference and he's in gatherings in China, and everyone is talking about Iran and the resistance.

And he was saying a lot of these communists from that part of the world—he said they're from Africa, from Latin America, and elsewhere—they were, you know, half jokingly and half seriously talking about converting to Shia Islam because they see that this ideology is, you know, of course this is me saying it, but that the ideology is so effective against empire and against imperialism and against hegemony and domination and injustice, and the domination of the powerful over the oppressed. So the soft power that Iran has, and the resistance has today, and the axis of resistance has today across the world among liberation movements and people who are confronting the empire and who see resistance to empire as key, is extraordinary. And so not only that, but besides that, the culture of resistance that exists is the fact that the people who designed Iran's defenses were brilliant.

They have been able to create a defense capability over decades, where the Americans, with all their firepower and all their wealth, combined with their proxies in the region and, of course, the Israeli regime, which has everything that the West has and gives to them, they failed. Despite all that power, all that firepower, after 40 days they failed, and that has shaken the world. People across the world are talking about the hegemon failing against the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the Israeli regime, of course, failing against Hezbollah in Lebanon. And so, obviously, this doctrine, these capabilities that Iran has, they are—I'm sure that armies across the world would like to know how Iran does that.

And another thing, Nima, besides Iran's underground bases and its underground factories and its underground assets that exist across the country—air bases underground, air defense systems stored underground—despite all that, and the fact that most of Iran's missile bases are still untouched, they haven't even been used, but Iran has an ocean of missiles and drones. Iran has been producing missiles and drones 24 hours a day for years now, because as they've been building

these underground bases, they were filling them up with missiles and drones. And we saw how older drones were used to destroy U.S. assets; even F-5s were used to strike U.S. targets.

So Iran now has an ocean of, you know, literally countless drones and missiles that it can use in the phase ahead. So instead of buying large numbers of airplanes from the West, like other countries do, from the United States, which would ultimately be useless against such overwhelming air power, the Iranians designed a defensive and offensive capability which the Americans can do nothing about. And of course, I think in the upcoming, quite possible, quite probable war that we're going to see in the days ahead, most probably, we're going to see a continuation of that. The Iranians don't want war, but we discussed this before. We don't want war. We did not start this war. We did not bring about this economic crisis for the world. The United States, Netanyahu, Israel, and Zionism did that.

But the Iranians believe that a longer war is better for us. We've discussed this since almost the beginning of the war. You and I have spoken about this multiple times. The Iranians have prepared themselves for a very long war. So the missile and drone and other capabilities will continue to weaken the United States at a time when the United States is weak. They've spent so much of their own capabilities and their munitions that in some instances they're critically low. So Iran will outlast the United States, and countries across the world—military, the armed forces of different countries—are watching, and they want Iran. Without a doubt, they would like Iran to help them develop their own capabilities, their own indigenous capabilities. After all, Iran defeated them. Iran defeated the empire.