

Prof. Ted Postol: The Third Round of War Is Israel's Worst Nightmare Yet

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#Nima

Hi, everybody. Today is Friday, May 8, 2026, and our dear friend, Professor Ted Postol, is here with us. Welcome, Ted.

#Ted

Wonderful to be here. Thank you.

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Ted, let me start with one of the breaking news. We've learned from Channel 14 Israel that the early warning system seems to show some sort of malfunction. They have announced that the Israeli early warning system detected a missile launch from Iran toward the Negev, but it suddenly disappeared. There seems to be a malfunction in the detection system. Why is that? Is that a problem with the communication they had before this war started with the radars in the GCC countries? Or is it something internal in Israel? It doesn't matter what has happened to the GCC countries.

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Well, without knowing a lot of detail, there's no way to know. But Israel's early warning system has not been functioning very well. I mean, it's at a marginal level, really, since the first few days after the February 28 attack.

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The Iranians, within two days or so, destroyed all of the critical radars that are needed for quality early warning in Israel. There's a large, what's called an ultra-high-frequency radar in Qatar. They destroyed that radar. Well, the face of the radar—there are three faces on that radar—the face that looks toward Iran was damaged enough that the radar can no longer operate. And that radar was

critical because it operates at what's called UHF frequencies, ultra-high-frequency radar. Maybe for those who know, 450 megahertz is kind of a rough frequency range.

And at that frequency, the radar reflectivity of missiles launched from Iran is relatively large. At higher frequencies, the radar reflectivity gets much smaller. So this radar does not have the same precision of tracking that higher-frequency radars would have, but it has the great value of range capability. So it can see a large number of missiles when they're launched toward Israel in particular, or the Persian Gulf military bases that the United States has, when they're ballistic missiles, of course—I'm not talking about drones.

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And those missiles can be tracked with enough precision that they can tell roughly where they are headed. There's another warning system in space that the United States operates, a satellite system, and it can tell almost instantly that missiles are being launched because it sees the hot exhaust plume of the missile. And the hot exhaust plume is observable essentially when the rocket motor ignites. And the satellites can actually see through clouds. They operate at certain wavelengths where the attenuation of infrared in the clouds is relatively small. So they can see the launch, and they're quite sensitive.

But they cannot track the missile long enough or with enough precision to accurately tell where they are going, although they can tell well enough to determine whether it's heading toward Israel or a Gulf state. So they're good enough for that, but they can't tell whether the missile is going to land in Tel Aviv or Haifa, for example. So you need a radar for that, and the long-range radar is critical in Qatar for what's called cueing the THAAD radars—these much higher-frequency, shorter-wavelength radars that operate at what's called X-band. So the UHF radar operates at 500 megahertz, or half a gigahertz, let's say. The X-band radar operates at 10 gigahertz, so it's 20 times higher frequency. This gives it a much higher spatial resolution. The problem is the radar cross-section, the radar reflectivity of objects at X-band, is much lower.

And these radars are much smaller and have less power, so they need to be told, "Look in this area of the sky," because the radar is like a searchlight. If you know exactly where to look, you don't have to spend a lot of time searching around for a target. So the acquisition of the targets is critical. And so there's a combination of these radars. Those radars no longer operate. So if you're in Israel, you would know that Israel is under—that missiles are gonna land somewhere in Israel—from the space-based system. And it looks like that's pretty much what they have been using. They have radars for the Arrow system. This is a much shorter-range missile defense. Those radars, some of those radars, may still be operating. There are Patriot radars that also might still be operating because they're harder to find and harder to attack.

So I don't know if all those radars have been destroyed yet. But my guess is the Israelis have been using Patriot and Arrow radars for warning. But, you know, you don't know how well they're

operating. The Patriot does have a problem, in the past at least, where it loses targets when it's tracking them. But that's a software problem that it had, and presumably that software problem has been addressed or solved. But who knows? I mean, these radars are very complex. Everything is being put together on a shoestring because the warning system that was really quite robust before it was destroyed no longer exists. So they're operating with pieces of a system that tells them, yeah, missiles have been launched in Iran. So in the next nine or 10 or 12 minutes, things are going to be happening in Israel.

But I can't tell you if it's Haifa or Beersheba or so. So everybody has to be on alert. And so I think the system, you know, this has had a tremendous effect on the population because earlier you could say to the population in Haifa that something's going to happen, take cover. But you didn't have to roll everybody out of bed at night in Tel Aviv and Beersheba and everywhere else. So this puts a lot of stress on people's lives if you're up a few times a night when these attacks are going on. I'm not yet... I haven't heard that the ballistic missile attacks have again started against Israel. Has that happened? I've been working on this briefing. Yeah. Do you know that there are ballistic missile attacks on Israel now?

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No, no, no. It wasn't a ballistic missile attack on Israel. They had detected it, but it was wrong, you know. The detection was some sort of malfunction in the system.

#Ted

Yeah.

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It wasn't. There was no attack on Israel.

#Ted

Yeah. Well, it could be anywhere. It could even be the early warning satellites, you know.

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So...

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It's very hard to know. These are complicated systems. When they work, they're very helpful. They're not the silver bullet that some people think they are, but they certainly are of great help. But they're far from perfect, and that's a big issue. When you work with these systems, you always have to ask, am I getting information that's accurate? So...

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Ted, we know that they have sent an Iron Dome or something like the Iron Dome to the UAE to defend the UAE during the war. Usually, when it comes to the Iron Dome, we haven't talked about the Iron Dome. We were talking about the Patriot system, the Arrow. What is the Iron Dome, and what is the function of the Iron Dome?

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Well, Iron Dome was supposed to be able to intercept artillery rockets. That's what it was designed to do. Artillery rockets are, of course, generally unguided rockets that are launched. Their ranges are kilometers to maybe 20 or 30, even 100 kilometers or so. And they're relatively cheap and unsophisticated. They deliver warheads that range from five or six kilograms to maybe even 100 or 150 kilograms if they're very big ones and long-range. And they have been a tremendous problem for the Israelis because these rockets have been fired from Lebanon and Gaza into Israel for years now. And so the Israelis put together this missile defense system they call Iron Dome. They've been lying about its performance right from the beginning.

They claim, I think, an 87% intercept rate. Its intercept rate is probably below 5%. You know, it's been a very, very low performance. Although my political science genius at Stanford thinks it's working without data. And so the idea was to try to make the interceptor very inexpensive. So what the Israelis did is they modified an air-to-air missile. These are missiles that you can carry under the wing of a plane. And they increased its booster capabilities, the propulsion section, so that you give it the extra propulsion it needs because when it's fired from the ground, it needs considerably more propulsion to gain speed and range, whereas when it's fired from an aircraft, it already has a good altitude and already has speed.

So it's really a very souped-up air-to-air missile, very sophisticated, I might add. And this was supposed to be able to hit artillery rockets. And the artillery rockets, their speed is 200, 300, 400 meters per second, which is different from 3,000 meters per second for a strategic missile from Iran. So the crossing speed is much lower. And the crossing speed is important because the crossing speed determines how I see the missile, I see the target at a certain range, and I only have a certain amount of time to adjust to hit it. If the crossing speed is very high, I just don't have time. It just flies right by me. So the crossing speeds it's designed to deal with are much lower.

And for reasons I have not been able to understand, it's failed catastrophically against short-range missiles. So I can't tell you why it's failing, but I can tell you it is failing because we have substantial data, mostly from night engagements, where we can see the motion of the missiles and we can see when an intercept occurs. Intercepts occur almost never with Iron Dome. Now, that's against ballistic targets, artillery rockets. And of course, they've been firing them at strategic rockets, which was an incredible waste of interceptors. Now, this Iron Dome interceptor is enormously capable against drones and aircraft. I mean, it's basically a modified anti-aircraft missile.

Drones are an even easier target than an airplane because they're moving more slowly, and they don't have the evasion capabilities that a lucky pilot who sees this thing coming might be able to bring about. So it's an excellent missile for shooting at drones. So my guess is somebody woke up and said, let's stop wasting these interceptors and move them to a location where they can be useful, where there are lots of drone attacks chipping away at these military bases in the Gulf. And so that's my guess as to what happened here. So the people are, you know, it's very confusing. It's how these interceptors work and what they're capable of engaging.

And it's been in the interest, certainly, of the Israelis and the Americans to confuse people as much as possible, because none of these systems are working well against the particular targets they were designed to deal with. And so what you want to do is, you don't want to tell people we spent \$50 billion on this weapon system and it doesn't work. You know, it's a little bit of an embarrassment, to say the least. So you keep lying about it. And the more you lie about it, the more you become the victim of your own propaganda. Because, you know, there are only a few people who have the technical knowledge and expertise to understand what's actually happening.

So when you lie like this, you also have the effect of misinforming all these people in the US government, and probably in the Israeli government as well, about how well this system is performing. Because, as I've mentioned multiple times, the people in these supposedly privileged leadership positions don't necessarily know more than the person on the street. You know, they're getting a lot of their information verbally. They don't read or necessarily have access or inclination to read technical reports. The technical reports about these missiles are quite commonly classified and held tightly because they would reveal that the systems are not functioning. When I was involved and I revealed that the Patriot failed to function in the Gulf War of 1991, I still had active clearances at that time, you know, for classified information. And when I went to Congress, they showed me this report on Patriot, and it was slick. And it was, you know, 90% performance. I mean, you just couldn't, you know, you wouldn't believe it if you saw it. And a very, very slick, glossy paper, very nice, expensive printing, color and all this. And it was complete nonsense. It was complete nonsense. And this is the kind of thing they're circulating for leadership. So, you know, President Bush, H.W. Bush, he used to go forward in 1991. He did not know that Patriot was failing in the Gulf War of 1991 until late in the war.

Neither did Dick Cheney, his then Secretary of Defense. They were told by the Israeli Minister of Defense in a meeting, I think it was in January, so the war was almost over. It was toward the end of the war. And they literally did not know. So you see, the idea that people in these leadership positions are well informed is not necessarily true. And that's what makes things so problematic. That's why I have spent such an inordinate amount of time warning people about Iran's nuclear capability. Not because I think the Iranians are in any way inclined to use nuclear weapons against Israel first. I think they would if they were attacked by Israel with nuclear weapons.

And so the emphasis I have been constantly placing on Iran's program is not to say, oh, these guys are really dangerous. It's to say, don't assume they can't eliminate you as a state, Mr. Israeli, if you think you can attack them with impunity with nuclear weapons, because they can respond and they will eliminate you as a survivable state. So don't do it. I'm worried about the Israelis, not the Iranians. The Iranians have shown a tremendous, level-headed policy approach to nuclear weapons. They have not built a nuclear weapon. They have not taken a final step. And there are a multitude of reasons why they don't want to take steps toward a final nuclear capability.

They have Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, maybe the UAE even. You know, these states would immediately try to get nuclear weapons. In the case of certainly Turkey, I mean Saudi Arabia, they could get them very fast from Pakistan. So the Iranians understand that it's not in their security interest to have all these nuclear-armed states around them. So they don't want to provoke them. They're very clear on this. They've been very clear on this. This is well thought out. They get high marks for understanding what their options are. So they want to negotiate a sensible approach to dealing with the enrichment capabilities that they're developing.

They will not give it up. Absolutely will not give it up, because they are in conflict with two nations that have made it clear that their objective toward Iran is genocide. That's Israel, and that's the United States. You have a president of the United States saying, "I'll wipe them out completely. I'll end, you know, a multi-thousand-year civilization." Now, he can't do it unless he wants to use an incredible number of nuclear weapons. But this kind of rhetoric will get your undivided attention. It would get mine. And so then you tell the Iranians, "Well, we want you to give up enrichment." That is, let me translate that.

The only thing that's keeping Israel from attacking me with nuclear weapons is that I could strike back. We want you to give up ballistic missiles and drones, which are the only things that keep these Americans and the Israelis under control, because otherwise their Navy would be sailing right into the Persian Gulf and bombarding me. And believe us, even though we attacked you while we were in negotiations with you twice. And by the way, the situation where we don't accept your government, but we created your government — we started in 1953 with Mossadegh. We then put in a terrible, repressive dictator, and then in 1979 another repressive government replaced the repressive dictator.

We don't like that government, but we like the other one. That was okay. Even though we were, in fact, giving them, through the "peace through atomic energy" silliness, we're okay making believe that atomic energy has no connection to atomic weapons. We were helping the Shah build a nuclear program when it was clear his intent was to eventually have nuclear weapons. So all of this mess has been made mostly by the United States. And if you sit there as a well-educated Iranian, and there are a lot of them, you say to yourself, how do I deal with these crazies? They have no sense of history. They have no morality.

They somehow think that, you know, all Muslims are like crazy lunatics, like, you know, Osama bin Laden is. You know, they can't tell the difference between one person and another. You know, how do I negotiate with these people? And the answer is, it's very difficult, and you're going to need some real guarantees if you're going to reach an agreement. And that's what's going on now from the Iranian side. And from the Western side, you have these maniacs in Israel who are destroying Israel. I mean, if you were a supporter of Israel's future, let's not say Zionist, because maybe you could be an enlightened Israeli and say, we owe the Palestinians the right to be here too. You know, you could be enlightened.

And you wanted Israel to survive as a state, even not being a Zionist. You would look at this current Israeli government and you'd say, they're destroying our future. The Israeli government is now persona non grata with most American people who follow politics. That includes most American Jews. You know, they look at this government, they're murdering people at a fantastic rate. They're engaged in genocide, not only in Gaza, in southern Lebanon. They're crazy. They want to kill off everybody and then take it over. It's like, you know, 5,000 years ago, you salt the land after you defeat your enemy. So you have this in Israel. Then you have the United States completely out of control.

And what do you do from the point of view of an Iranian? You can't trust anything the Americans tell you. So it's a very difficult situation. I agree. I'm very sympathetic toward the Iranian leadership's dilemma with regard to dealing with diplomacy, because diplomacy is the only realistic solution. And the behavior of the United States and Israelis has thrown doubt on whether diplomacy with these two absolute lunatic states has any meaning. So it's a difficult situation. But as I'll try to point out later, diplomacy is the only way of doing things. You have no choice. The bottom line is, I'm losing time, so it's all right, but I can give the summary here. The bottom line is,

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In 2025, basically before the Americans, the June 2025 attack on Iran, the Iranians were producing over 400 centrifuges per month. We know that because it was under monitoring from the International Atomic Energy Agency. That's a lot of centrifuges. And we don't know what amount of that manufacturing capacity is underground in tunnels now. Presumably, parts of it were destroyed in this massive attack that occurred. But that doesn't mean it was all destroyed. And given the

situation and the Iranian sensitivity to the extreme aggressiveness of the United States and Israel, it's very hard for me to believe. I don't know, but it's very hard for me to believe. I just put myself in the Iranians' position. Incidentally, if you're ever really doing serious policy work, that's the only way to understand the other side so that you can negotiate with them sensibly.

And I sit there and I say, I'm advising the Ayatollah, any Ayatollah, not just the last one. And I'm a technical person, and the Ayatollah asks me, what should we do? Well, I'd say, well, we should certainly move some of our manufacturing facilities to locations where the Americans can't get at it. These are these tunnels, which are essentially impossible, for practical purposes, to destroy. And we don't have to have it all there, but we should make sure that we have what we need to continue enrichment should we need to. It's just prudent. It's not, you know. And it's very hard for me to believe that the Iranians haven't done this. I'm not trying to ascribe immoral behavior to them. This is an existential threat they're facing.

Why would you do otherwise when you're facing adversaries who literally want to destroy your civilization? You know, you have no choice but to do prudent things like this. So, for example, I think it's plausible—again, I don't know—it's plausible to assume that the Iranians can produce 100 or even 200 centrifuges per month even now, and that they may have a significant number of centrifuges already in place in tunnels somewhere. Whether they're all set up as centrifuges, maybe they are, maybe they're not. We don't know. But to assume that they have no capability is really the ultimate in stupidity. It's the ultimate in stupidity. Why don't we take a look at slide number six, because I want to make a few points. We won't have a chance to go through a lot of it, but...

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This shows you the curve of the critical mass versus percentage of enrichment. So if you look at the x-axis, let's look at the left curve. If you look at the x-axis on the left curve, you see it goes from 0 to 100%. And you see a red line at roughly 90%. And you see a curve at the bottom. You see a red line starting at the 90% and going upward and intersecting a curve at about 14 kilograms. That's the critical mass you need to build a nuclear weapon if you surround the weapon with what's called a reflector. I'll describe what I mean by that shortly. When people say the Iranians can build 10 or 11 nuclear weapons by quickly enriching the 60% enriched uranium hexafluoride they have, they are talking about 25-kilogram critical masses.

So that's the last—if you look, I think you should be able to read it. You see a red line at the top of the group of solid lines below. That's the 25-kilogram point. So you can see that if you design a weapon with either a uranium, and I'll describe what I mean by that, or beryllium reflector, you could need much less uranium to build a nuclear weapon. So let's take a look at slide 10. This is a notional discussion. This is a notional diagram of a nuclear weapon called a gun-assembled nuclear weapon, where this looks nothing like the bomb that was designed and dropped on Hiroshima. This is a more modern design. You have a sphere of enriched uranium with a significant hole in it.

And in that hole, you could have more uranium-235, which you would shove in using explosives to drive plugs of U-235 into the center, resulting in a sphere of a certain critical mass. All right, so this is a reasonable design for a, you know, a second generation—by second generation I mean an unsophisticated atomic bomb using uranium-235. It's easily implemented. You don't need to test this as a nuclear test because the only thing you need to test is the assembly mechanism, which you can do with depleted uranium. Make sure it all works as you expect it to. And then all you do is substitute enriched uranium, weapons-grade uranium, for the depleted uranium, and the system will certainly work. So this is a weapon you don't need to test.

Let's look at slide 11. Let's put some numbers on this. Well, if we look to the left, the leftmost slide, the gridded circles—the spheres that are gridded circles—show you the rough diameter of a critical mass of uranium to get a nuclear detonation if you have nothing surrounding it. In other words, the neutrons leak out, and you just need more and more uranium to make up for that. So you need 55 kilograms to build a nuclear weapon. With 20 kilograms of enriched uranium, you would have to surround it with about 10 centimeters. So you see the diameter is maybe 25 centimeters, but there's 10 centimeters on either side of uranium-238. Uranium-238 mainly performs the function of reflecting neutrons back in.

It also performs the function of putting a very large mass around the enriched uranium core, which means that when the core goes nuclear and starts pushing outward, the mass will delay the rapid expansion outward and thereby lead to a higher-yield nuclear weapon. So now the weight of the uranium reflector is large. So if I take the reflector and the core together, the whole thing weighs 350 kilograms. But if everything else I need weighs another 150 kilograms, this whole thing can weigh 500 kilograms. So that's enough to be carried by any of the standard long-range missiles that Iran is now using to attack Israel. So when you look at the most recent edition of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, another one of my favorite inaccurate information societies, you'll see this little video they put out.

And at the end of it, a guy named Steve Vedder, who should know better because he's actually technically trained and he was in the science advisor's office, he's there telling people—wrongly, wrongly—that an Iranian nuclear weapon would be much too big and cumbersome and heavy to fly on an Iranian ballistic missile. Bullocks. That's not true. And if maybe the Bulletin wants to come out with a design analysis that shows why this is wrong, I'd be really interested, but I don't think they have the technical capabilities in the organization, even though they claim to be experts. So this is a real problem. Now, why is it a real problem? Why am I always so focused on these organizations?

Because they misinform people. And it's important to understand that the Iranians are not far away from this capability if they choose to do it. Because if you think they are far away from it, then you will have a policy that does not assume that you have a critical need to negotiate with them. So this is not just Ted Postol having a vendetta against the Bulletin, which incidentally I do. I don't like this organization. It's a group of people who misrepresent themselves as experts, and they don't do their homework. They could do their homework, but they don't. So it's inexcusable. But they're driving

policy decisions because lots of people assume they know what they're talking about. After all, they say they're experts. So... the Albert Einsteins and Oppenheimers are no longer part of the Bulletin.

The Bulletin has degenerated into a social club. And there are not many technical people there, and the technical people there have limited knowledge, and they're lazy. So that's important. That's why I keep going back to this. You need accurate information in order to formulate policies that make sense. And if you have accurate information on this particular issue, you will know that it's absolutely imperative to quickly make it possible for the Iranians to negotiate with you. It's not the Iranians. They're happy to negotiate, as I've tried to explain. They have every reason to negotiate. But if you're so screwed up that you can't even figure out how to put them in a position where they think they can negotiate with you, then you've got a real problem. Now, on the right side, there's the 14.1-kilogram core.

And so that's also surrounded by 10 centimeters of, in this case, beryllium. Beryllium is an extremely lightweight material, and it operates as a neutron reflector. So the advantage of it is the weapon you would build would have an overall weight — the components would have an overall weight — of 40 or 50 kilograms rather than 350. But this would probably give you a somewhat lower-yield explosion because the tamper, the reflector, also operates as a massive shield that prevents the uninhibited expansion of the core when it goes nuclear. And this is a very light core, so it doesn't have the mass that the uranium reflector has. So again, if I were the technical advisor to you, to Ayatollah Nima, I would advise you, I'd say, well, you know, we have the capacity to carry 500, 600, 700 kilograms on a long-range missile.

So that's not an issue. The weapon size will not be very different. Its weight will be different. Let's use the uranium-reflected core. First of all, it's easier to work with than beryllium. And also, we'll probably get a higher-yield weapon, because these weapons can yield between 5 and 15 kilotons without implosion. Implosion gives you more density in the uranium, but it's a complicated scheme. And an implosion mechanism is much—well, we have to test that. We can't just use it against the Israelis without testing. So if we want a simple device that we just have without ever testing, but have it, the uranium-reflected weapon is fine. It will do the job for us. So my guess is we're looking at uranium-reflected weapons.

That's what the Iranians have in the background. So I'm not saying they're doing it yet. All right, so what does all this mean? Let's go to slide 23. See, I'm skipping over an enormous amount. We have this—let's go to slide 21 very quickly. This shows you what I had described earlier, that each amount of work I do removes a fixed amount of uranium-238. You can think of it as separated work units in this case. And so when we get to the right side and we have 50% enriched uranium hexafluoride, to enrich to 100% takes much less effort than to enrich to 50%, because to enrich to 50% took eight steps, seven or eight steps, whereas one step gets me to 100% from the 50%.

So we have this accelerating capability. So when we have 60% enriched uranium hexafluoride—let's go to slide 23 now—we would need 5,500 kilograms separative work units per year to get 25

kilograms of 90% enriched uranium. But if we have a small, maybe 38 kilograms of 60% enriched uranium hexafluoride, I can get 25 kilograms of 90% enriched uranium with about 120 separative work units. And given a cascade of maybe 350 centrifuges, which the Iranians have demonstrated, we know that they can do this. The IAEA reported this. It's one and a half weeks of work, you know, if it's all set up to get that enrichment.

That gives us, and since they're 440, if you look at the next step down, they're 440 kilograms of 60% enriched uranium, and we need 38 kilograms to have 25 kilograms for a bomb, it means we have roughly 11 bombs' worth of uranium in the 60% enriched uranium. However, what if we only need 14.1 kilograms of enriched uranium because we're building bombs with 10-centimeter depleted uranium reflectors, like I just described? The technology for doing that is no harder, not harder at all, to fabricate such a bomb relative to, you know, the 25-kilogram bomb. It's a heavier bomb, but we know we can carry it on a ballistic missile. So if we only need 68, we only need 68 separative work units to take the smaller amount. We have 21 kilograms now of 60% enriched uranium.

21 kilograms gives us 14 kilograms of 90% enriched uranium. Then we only need 68 SWU, separative work units. That's about five or six days to get the 14.1 kilograms of 90% enriched uranium for a bomb. Notice also that since we only need—actually, this number here is wrong. The number below there is 14.1 seconds. In the last equation on the bottom, that's wrong. I put it together this morning. That should be 440 kilograms over 21 kilograms. So we're really talking about 20, 22, or 23 bombs that I can build with the currently available 60% enriched uranium. So the current wisdom is these guys could build 10 bombs, but in fact, that's not correct. They can build 20 bombs if they're willing to have a heavier bomb.

And the 10-bomb number comes from a number that was bureaucratically arrived at when people were talking about uranium enrichment. You know, they were trying to set standards for the Non-Proliferation Treaty. And after a lot of hemming and hawing and bureaucratic infighting, they arrived at a standard that 25 kilograms of highly enriched uranium would constitute a potential bomb. But in fact, it's 14 or 15 kilograms. And if you were Steve Fetter, you should know that. And you should understand that the bomb you would design would also be able to be carried by a ballistic missile that already exists and is operating. So does this mean we, the Americans and the Israelis, must understand, redouble, and redouble again our efforts to destroy Iran? No. What it means is we have to do everything we can.

It's in our interest to do what the Iranians also want to do: give them a negotiated position that allows them to guarantee their security, while at the same time gives us confidence that they're not an active nuclear weapon state. They may be a potential nuclear weapon state, but they're not active. They know what's in their best interest. They're not going to go further unless we give them a reason to go further. So this is an argument not for going after the Iranians more aggressively. This is an argument for being very serious about negotiating. And I can't understand why so many people are trying to downplay this threat. I'm not trying to overstate it. I'm talking the technical reality.

Somebody can show, if Steve Fetter wants to, invite him on. Let him explain why I'm wrong. Have the Bulletin on. Let him do it. Let's hear their argument. But lulling people into the sense that there's no problem here is crazy, because it not only shows a lack of understanding of the technical realities, it shows a lack of understanding and respect for the politics of Iran. Because these people are not crazy. They're not a bunch of crazy Osama bin Ladens. They're a bunch of very deeply thinking, well-informed, highly educated people who know what's in their security interest, and they understand that not having a nuclear weapon is in their interest. So give them a chance, negotiate with them. Anyway, so that's the point of this number.

But we're talking about many more nuclear weapons, all of them deliverable by ballistic missiles in a short period of time. I'm not talking about if you want to produce, you know, if this situation were to persist—let's say it persists for four or five years, which could well happen—and the Iranians choose to enrich natural uranium, they could produce a bomb per year from natural uranium, in addition to the 20 nuclear weapons they could produce from the 60% enriched uranium in weeks. So this country has a lot of firepower, a lot of firepower, and they don't want to use it. So work out a deal. You know, they're happy to be inspected as long as it's reasonable and you're not trying to destroy their ability to defend themselves.

If you want to take an Israeli statement, the Israelis like to say, "We have the right to defend ourselves." Well, so do the Iranians. You know, this idea that the Israelis have the right to defend themselves by killing and massacring all the people around them, while all the Iranians want is to be left alone in order to defend themselves—I mean, it's so ridiculous, it's hard to believe. And this is because of the incredible short-sightedness of Western people and also the complete lack of serious discussion from the community that sees itself as the arms control community, the community that sees itself as the community that is negotiating a safer world.

So why isn't the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists producing analysis like this and saying, look, politically, these guys want to negotiate? Here's the evidence. We have lots of evidence that they want to. They went into this agreement, the JCPOA. So we know they want to negotiate. If we listen to their analysis, people who are involved in the negotiations, they give you the argument that I just gave. It's not my argument. It's an argument they came up with. I mean, like I said, if I looked at the situation the way Mohammad Zarif looked at it, you know, yeah, sure.

I come up with the same answer because the constraints are the same. And if you're using logic, you come up with the same solution. So there's no argument here from the Iranian point of view that they want to negotiate. But the West is not making it possible. So why isn't the Bulletin explaining to people why the incentive should be emphasized to negotiate? Instead, they're putting out nonsense about how the Iranians can't do this. I don't mean to be insulting. They write on cabals. It's just so pathetic. It really is pathetic. And there is an underlying racism here. There is an underlying—I have argued this for many years.

It's like, you know, there was a debate in the United States around 2000, 2010. It was so ridiculous that it's shameful, but I should bring it up because it exposes ignorance and racism. It was a debate about deterrence, you know, deterrence. Are other countries rational enough to be deterred like we would be? I mean, if you go on a farm and go near a cow that's just had calves, you would understand deterrence. A female cow who's just had calves will deter you from going near her calves. I mean, what are you talking about? The underlying racism in that argument is extraordinary.

And this was a conversation that was going on at the top of American government. And people with straight faces were making it. And nobody said, do you understand that that's racist? You know, it's hard to believe. And this is the kind of narrowness of intellect that we see, certainly in the American mind. The Israeli mind is distorted in a different way, but distorted, no doubt. And unless you recognize the rationality and humanity of your potential adversary, you're always going to do the wrong thing. Because if you're dealing with someone irrational, there's no way to stop them if they have the resources, and the Iranians have the resources.

But the irrational players in this case are the Israelis. I don't know what these guys are capable of. I just don't know what they're capable of. I mean, I have friends in Israel. You know, I wouldn't say I know Israel well now because I can't imagine. The Israel I knew from 10 or 20 years ago, I can't—and I know the soldiers. I know many of these people. These people would never, never shoot a child alive, you know, as a sniper. Never. This is routinely going on there. Something has changed in a horrifying way. And the society has descended into some kind of horrifying semi—well, not semi—fascist state. And this is really problematic. So.

#Nima

Yeah.

#Ted

Anyway, so I didn't get a chance to talk about centrifuges. Yeah.

#Nima

We're going to continue these talks, Ted.

#Ted

But the point I want to make here is that we are talking about a country that has extraordinarily sophisticated technical capabilities and extraordinary rationality in its policymaking. And, you know, when you go to war, it's a terrible thing. You destroy things. But they have fought this war with unbelievable skill. They have shown that they know what they're doing in the way they fought the war. They've really effectively defeated. And if the war starts again, which I think it will—I hope I'm

wrong—they're going to put Israel and the United States both in a much worse military situation. The game is over from the point of view of the military, the weight of the military defeat.

It's going to get worse, not better, for the United States and Israel. And, you know, we're going to have the fleet, the American naval forces, standing off, you know, 1,000 kilometers or 600 kilometers off the Strait of Hormuz, helpless. So we can bomb, to some extent, Iranian structures on the surface. We can't do anything to their military. There was a report I just saw—I don't know how accurate it is—but I believe it. I think it's that 75% of the launchers—the CIA just issued a report that 75% of the launchers are still operating in Iran. Almost. In fact, it sounds to me a little high.

A little low, I'm sorry, a little low, because I don't know how we could have destroyed all these launchers. I mean, it's so hard to find these things. And you're only over the country for a short interval of time. And, you know, you just don't have the capacity to do it. So the CIA, you know, they said they destroyed it all earlier, there's nothing left. Now there's a CIA report that leaks, it says 75% of the launchers are still there. So you're talking about a country—we don't have 75% of our strike capability anymore. We've used up all our, you know, our cruise missiles, our standoff missiles, almost all of our air defense missiles.

Who's in a worse situation? It's amazing. And still, having a reasonable approach to diplomacy is not on the drawing board. And the organizations that are supposed to be explaining to people what a rational policy alternative would be are out there saying, oh, don't worry, they can't build a bomb because it'd be too big to fly on a missile. Don't worry about those guys, you know, they can't do it. Well, they can do it. And they don't want to do it. That's the other important thing. They can do it, and they don't want to do it. So give them a chance. Use diplomacy. That's the point of this discussion here now.

#Nima

Yeah, exactly. Thank you so much, Ted, for being with us today. Great pleasure, as always.

#Ted

Well, call the Bulletin and ask them why they're not arguing for that policy. Write them. If you can get an address for them—they're also hard to reach. It took me a little while to get people's email addresses. If you want, just write me a note. I'll send them to you. I'll send you the CEO's address. As she said in my discussion with her, she's very busy, so she didn't have a chance to read anything that I sent her. So I'm not busy, of course, but she's busy. Important person. So... too busy to know what you're talking about. That's what the bottom line was. I'm here to tell you I'm an expert, give you advice. And by the way, I just have no interest in understanding what sound advice would be. So I produce this nonsense like they just produced in the most recent edition. Go look at the video. Yeah. And complain.

#Nima

Thank you, Ted.

#Ted

Thank you. Thank you, and we'll be talking.

#Nima

See you soon. Yeah, bye-bye.